

What Are You Reading?

The Fall of the Kings—And Other Musings

By Debbie Block-Schwenk

When Ellen Kushner wrote *Swordspoint* in 1987, queer fantasy fans were delighted. The story of bisexual swordsman Richard and his mysterious, sharp-tongued lover Alec negotiating the intricacies and conspiracies of a place known only as "The City" had fans crying out for more.

We finally got it. In 2002, Kushner and life partner Delia Sherman put out *The Fall of the Kings* (Bantam Spectra trade paperback). Set sixty years after *Swordspoint*, we meet Theron Campion, the son Alec did not live to see. Theron has inherited his father's passionate nature, bisexuality, and connection to the ancient Tremontaine family.

While attending classes at the University, Theron begins a relationship with Basil St. Cloud, a young doctor of history. Basil's specialty is the ancient days when the kings were at their prime, guided by their advisors and lovers, the wizards. Later, the wizards' power was curbed, the kings became corrupt, and the nobility overthrew the monarchy—but was the corruption inevitable? And what exactly did the wizards do?

Obsessed with these questions, Basil finds his relationship with Theron to be both a retreat and an incentive for further study. "The past is never dead," he tells Theron. "It lives on in the present, in our laws and our customs, even in the way we think and speak." (Pg. 66)

While students from the Northern home of the ancient kings try to bring ancient legends back to life, Basil delves deeper into his studies. His quest for the truth leads to ancient documents and dangerous questions. Had the wizards actually practiced magic? Or were their powers more mundane, just laced with ritual and a potent sexuality that tempts even Basil's students when they, along with Theron, stumble into it:

"Theron half-danced, half-staggered back into the arms of one of the men. It was Alaric Finn, who caught him and flung him across to another man,

Fall continues on page 6

Alma Mater: Almost Bi

By Deb Morley

Almost bi. That's how I feel about Rita Mae Brown's novel, *Alma Mater*. The story takes place on the William & Mary campus where, in her senior year, "Vic" (Victoria) finds herself attracted to the woman who has moved in next door. Suddenly, all the things that had seemed so certain, namely that she would become the wife of Charly, the star of the football team, and rest easy in her future as a member of his prominent family are in question.

Despite the fact (stop here if you plan to read this book as I'm going to reveal the ending!) that Vic eventually leaves Charly and chooses a monogamous relationship with Chris—the woman next door with whom the mutual attraction erupts into a passionate love affair—there is something very familiar about the contemplation done by Vic about her sexuality, and her attraction to both Chris and Charly. Also, Vic's sexual awakening occurs during a time that she is sexually involved with both a man and a woman. In fact, her desire for sex with Charly increases as a result of her experiencing sex with a woman.

The support Vic receives from her best friend, Jinx, is the voice of non-judgment and possibility that all who meander

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Bi booklovers sorting through boxes of books at the Fall BBWN Book Swap.

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Volunteers of the Month

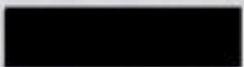
Gail Zacharias

Robyn Ochs

Deb Morley

Wayne Bryant

Katrina



Marcia Diehl

Linda Blair

Debbie Block-
Schwenk

Carla Imperial

Steph Miserlis

Annie Gogle

Beth Bishop

And many more
fabulous people!
You know who
you are!

BiWomen is published bi-
monthly.

Editor:

Ellyn Ruthstrom

**Printed on
recycled paper**

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

Booklovers Anonymous

Hi, my name is Ellyn and I have too many books. It is a passion and perhaps more than that, dare I say, an obsession. I have relatives and friends who have sworn they will never help me move again because I own too many books. When I find other bibliophiles—especially ones who have more books than I do—there is an acknowledgement that passes between us. Ah, you understand. You know what it feels like to pick up that book, page through it, examine the cover and the paper quality, think about where it will go in your collection. And where did they find that copy of ____?! Damn.

Of course reading books isn't the same thing as owning them. I wish I had enough time to actually read all my books—the fantasy is that one day I *will* accomplish this. Until then it is always wonderful to hear what books other people are reading and this issue is full of possibilities in that area. I hope you enjoy the range of suggestions. And, also, I hope you'll let us know in the future what you are reading that other readers could enjoy. We'll try to make a regular "What Are You Reading?" section in each issue where you can contribute small reviews of your own favorites.

On page 3, Carla Imperial shares a loving tribute of her dear friend Beverly McGary. As Carla describes, Beverly was a tremendous booklover and BBWN recently became a beneficiary of a large part of her library. The generous gift of her books has brought in some unexpected funds to BBWN and has opened up an opportunity for us to use that money on something new. One idea is to hold a gathering of bi women in Beverly's honor later this year. There has also been a suggestion to use some of these funds to ensure that BBWN again sponsors the Pre-Pride Brunch this year. Are you interested in making either of these happen? Other ideas? E-mail me at nellythrustmor@aol.com and let me know if you'd like to help with the planning. And check the next newsletter for a meeting in April that will involve shaping these events.

Ellyn Ruthstrom

NEXT IN *BiWomen*

The *BiWomen* theme for
April/May is:

*Bisexual Women and Lesbians:
Can We Talk?*

What is the tension between bi women and lesbians? Is it a thing of the past or still in our community? Why do you think it exists? Share your positive and negative stories about bi/lesbian relationships—lovers, friends, political colleagues, etc.

Deadline: March 19, 2004

FUTURE ISSUES

June/July

Bi Politics: Local, National,
International

Send your suggestions for future topics to
nellythrustmor@aol.com

PLEASE SUBMIT TO *BiWomen* !

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,
black-and-white art, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to

NellyThrustmor@aol.com

***If you do not want your name
published, please tell us.***

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Dreamcatcher: A Tribute To Beverly McGary (Sept 7, 1962 - Sept 18, 2003)

By Carla Imperial

She kept spreadsheets for everything. Any problem in the world, she figured, could be solved with a spreadsheet. Her current project was solving world hunger. One particular spreadsheet she maintained included the titles and authors of every book she had ever read. It kept track of the books she was currently reading, with a column to list what page she was on. On average, she read about one hundred books at a time.

She was obsessed with highlighters, gel pens, rubber ducks, and boy bands. She had lists upon lists of life goals and dreams, from becoming a motivational speaker to having a meal in every state in the country. Her laugh was contagious. Her ability to improvise a speech or a make-believe situation and continue to stay in character was uncanny. She would see me in the hallway and pretend that we were long-lost friends. I would go along with it for awhile. I would say, "I didn't know you worked here!" and she would say, "Oh, I don't. I've just been living in the women's restroom." After awhile, I wouldn't be able to contain myself, but she would continue for the rest of the day, even through important meetings, pretending to be the bag lady from the restroom.

"She" is my friend and dreamcatcher, Beverly McGary. Beverly made life in the corporate tower human for me. We worked side-by-side together for fifteen years, supporting each other and reminding each other of our dreams outside. We planned our escape from the corporate world daily, and envisioned walking off the Mothership together. She was going to speak. I was going to write. Either way, we were unstoppable in what we felt we could accomplish without our golden handcuffs.

This past March, it became abundantly clear that it was time for me to leave my corporate job of 18 years to follow my dreams. I could not wait to get to the office to tell Beverly about my plans. She never showed up that day. I called her at home, only to find out



Friend and dreamcatcher Beverly McGary (left) with Carla Imperial.

that Beverly was in the hospital. She was having severe complications with her colon, aggravated by stress. She knew that this was a sign for her, too, to leave her job. She fought her illness as a true crusader, and we talked deliriously about our new lives with less wealthy pockets, but with much healthier souls.

I have learned that life is not always kind. Beverly passed away a few months later after a tough battle. I neither anticipated nor comprehend her death. Sometimes I cannot believe it. Instead, I write. I write with fervor. I write because I can. Because I am breathing. Beverly has given me a reminder that life is so clearly fragile and fleeting. She has left with me a legacy to open my heart, eyes, and ears, and catch those dreams while I am able. ▽

Beverly's partner, Gabriele Atchison generously donated most of Beverly's collection of books to The BBWN Book Project. It took three FULL carloads to transport all of the books, and they have already generated several hundred dollars of proceeds for BBWN. On behalf of everyone from BBWN, we are incredibly grateful to Gabriele and for the inspiring life of Beverly McGary.

Brunch Coordinator Wants You to Host!

BBWN potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area. We try to hold a brunch in a member's home each month so that people can relax and share food and experiences in a safe space. Deb Morley is the brunch coordinator, so please contact her at dgm@ias.ga.unc.edu if you are interested in hosting a brunch. Thanks Deb for volunteering! And check out the calendar on pages 11-12 for the brunches and other activities coming up in February and March. Hope you can join us.

Visit BBWN online at:
biresource.org/bbwn
for a calendar listing of
local bisexual events.

International Bi Conference Ready to Book Rooms

The Eight International Conference on Bisexuality will be held August 5-8, 2004 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The conference organizers have announced that the Holiday Inn Metrodome has been chosen as the official conference hotel. The hotel was selected because of its convenient location. It is located just off campus and a mere ten-minute walk to the primary conference venues of Coffman Union and Ford Hall. The Hotel is also in the heart of the Five Corners and West Bank of Minneapolis, a district offering several nightclubs, restaurants, cafes, and live theaters. Special conference hotel rates will be \$98 a night through July 1st, 2004, and is available by contacting the Holiday Inn Metrodome at 612-333-4646 or visiting www.metrodome.com and using conference code ICB. The conference planning committee also announced the securing of dormitory rooms on Campus for interested attendees. Rates will be \$32 to \$37 a day for accommodations in one of three on-campus dorms. Dorm information and registration is available online at www.8ICB.org. For more information or to register, visit www.8icb.org, or call 612-825-4400.

Book Clubbing: A Riddle, Rules, and Reading

By Steph Miserlis

Right now I'm reading *Breaking Clean* by Judy Blunt for book club. On the side, I'm reading *The DaVinci Code*. Actually, I'm reading *Breaking Clean* on the side at this point! If it weren't for being in a book club, I'd probably be reading a lot more bad science fiction, and *People* magazines. I've been in a couple of book clubs over the years—and both have been incredibly wonderful—with very committed readers who are intelligent, astute, well read, and funny. Apparently, these book clubs are not necessarily the norm. After talking with other book club people, I realize that I've been graced.

We have rules in our book clubs. At first, I was not too thrilled with this concept. As time went on, however, I began to appreciate how these rules have kept these long-standing book clubs running. Our rules dictate the amount of socializing allowed, and also that the book has to have been read by someone in the group to be suggested for discussion. And you can't come to a book club meeting unless you've read the book. Most importantly, the schedule is set; if you can't make it, too bad. Another rule I remember was "If you're hosting with pizza, no olives are allowed."

I love these groups. It's like when someone gives me a good riddle; I get a little thrill because the answer usually stretches me. It makes me look at something from a completely different place. I love that feeling—like a real twist ending in a well-made movie, or a dear friend's insight that makes me see outside my normal purview. As I get older, sadly, I think I get a bit more rigid in my thinking. So every month, I get that wonderful cerebral exercise with my book club.

Each person has such a unique perspective and insight on a book. During the discussions, things surface I may not have even considered about a book. Over time, I get to know the kind of perspective each book club member will bring. Chris will talk about the bigger implications and patterns of the book. Lucy will point out some interesting symbolism that's a common thread throughout the read. Catherine will get the discussion very heated. And if it gets too heated, Barbara—putting on her therapy hat—will bring it down to a dull roar. Elizabeth generally hates the book. Granted, she's a voracious reader, pulling in probably 40+ books a year, so she doesn't like wasting time on books that are sub-par, or not to her liking.

I personally love picking up books I'd never hear about or read because I'm not that

hungry of a reader. And I enjoy reading someone else's favorites. It could be a 20- or 30-year-old book, of which I've never heard. And usually, a 'book clubber' loved it so much, way back when, that it moved their life to a different place. They still have their original battered and yellowed book, and they are ready and almost fevered for discussion.

I read about 15-20 books a year. And my favorites tend to change every 2 or 3 years. I have to say that almost all the books I've discussed in book club have been memorable. Although, I could probably attribute that to interesting friends, a plain pizza, and a good read. ▽

New Local Writers Anthology

Out of the Blue Writers Unite is a new anthology featuring a wide variety of writers, mostly from the Cambridge/Somerville area. The book sells for \$13.99 and was funded by a grant by the Cambridge Arts Council and the Multicultural Arts Center. The editors of the book are Timothy Gager and Deborah Priestly, both published local writers and venue leaders in both the writing scene of Cambridge.

The anthology is available at the Out of the Blue Art Gallery at 106 Prospect Street, in Cambridge, as well as at Seven Stars, MacIntyre and Moore in Davis Square (near Diesel Cafe) and other stores and Amazon.com as well. The writers are from different backgrounds, social status, sexual orientations, and have had such a variety of personal experiences that are so unique (ranging from homelessness, sexual abuse, addiction, co-dependence, physical handicaps and the list just goes on). ▽

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outside the walls of traditional relationships hope for. "Why not both?" Jinx asks!

Finally, I have to say that as a person who identifies as lesbian, Rita Mae Brown writes one hot three-way encounter between Vic, Chris and Charly! Wow.

Could there have been a different (bi and/or poly affirmative) ending to this story? It almost seems as though the familiar ending of "girl gets girl" was strained as the author attempts to tie up all the loose ends of the story in an epilogue. "Almost Bi." That's what I call it. Maybe next time Rita Mae will take it to the limit, and beyond. ▽

A Diehard Ellen Fan Wants a Funnier Thing

By Denise

As a doctorate student I read all the time: manuals, research books, literary reviews, chronicles. If it is education-related, chances are I have read it. The problem is with all this scholarly reading, I do not have much time to read for enjoyment. But because reading is one of my hobbies, I buy lots of books on tape so that I can keep up with many of my favorite authors. I read what I refer to as "entertainment." Some of my favorite authors include E. Lynn Harris, John Grisham, Ann Rule, Mary Higgins Clark, Sue Grafton, and even some Stephen King. I love a good mystery and also light hearted comedy.

Most of my audio book listening is done on my commute to and from work (about 40 minutes each way Monday through Friday) so generally I can get through an audio book or two a week. Of course if they are really good, I listen during lunchtime and delay getting out of my car when I reach my destinations.

With that preface, let me move on to my review. I recently purchased Ellen DeGeneres's "The Funny Thing Is..." and liked it but did not think it was her best work. That is hard for me to admit, as I am a diehard DeGeneres fan. I have watched her sitcoms, comedy specials, and now watch her current talk show. I have seen (and own) every movie she has been in and read her other books. I always have great expectations that her humor delivery will make me laugh. Degeneres is the type of comedian that I can relate to. She does not stoop to profanity or insults to make her audience laugh. She uses real life situations and finds the humor in them.

In my opinion the organization and the

stories in "The Funny Thing Is..." were disappointing. DeGeneres was all over the place. She was humorous but not really funny. In one of the chapters she talked about her father, the situations were "corny" but not funny. The dressing room chapter was funny but a little overdone. I found myself smiling but not really laughing and when I did laugh (more towards the end of the book) it was more out of loyalty to her than the humor of what she was saying.

My favorite part of the book was when Degeneres makes this profound political statement about people who believe "marriage is a union between a man and a woman" and what their absurd fears of same-sex marriage would lead to. As a bisexual woman married to a lesbian, I think Degeneres summed those people right up. Even with that great chapter in the book, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being poor and 5 being

fabulous) I would give her a two for just okay and say don't spend your money on the book. You could just borrow it from me or from the library. Sorry, Ellen, I love you but "The Funny Thing Is..." is not your best work. ▽



Muslim LGBTIQ Conference

Al-Fatiha Foundation presents its Third North American Conference for LGBTIQ Muslims and their Allies February 13-16, 2004, in Los Angeles, California. For sponsorship or advertising information, please email Al-Fatiha at gaymuslims@yahoo.com and find more information at www.al-fatiha.net. Workshops and sessions will include: Coming Out: Where No One Has Gone Before?, Our Future in the Progressive Muslim Movement, Merging Multiple Identities: Being

Queer & Arab, Challenges Facing Muslim Lesbian & Bisexual Women, Building a Successful Queer Muslim Social/Support Group and more.

Two Bi Autobiographies To Check Out

Reviewed by Robyn Ochs

Meredith Maran, *What's It Like to Live Now*. Bantam Books, 1995, and *Notes from an Incomplete Revolution: Real Life Since Feminism*, Bantam Books, 1997.

It's really, truly, astoundingly difficult to find a book in which someone actually identifies proudly and unequivocally as bisexual. And Meredith Maran has written two! Both books are autobiographical writing by a bi-identified mother of two sons in a long-term same-sex relationship. She's an ex-hippie of the 60s generation living in Oakland, California, and a dedicated activist struggling to figure out how to live ethically in today's world.

Some of her writing directly addresses her bi identity, but most of what she writes about is Life: her relationships with her partner and with her exes, friends, family, her sons; competition; activism; race (she's white); the challenges of being a writer; body image; and self-esteem.

And the best part is that her writing flows—she makes you think, but reading her doesn't feel like hard work. ▽

Bisexual Resource Center House Party

Join the Bisexual Resource Center on Sunday, February 8th, 2-5 p.m., for its Third Annual Winter House Party at board member Sheeri Kritzer's home (39 Pearl St., Watertown, near Watertown Square). All are invited. Hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages will be served. Come schmooze with a bunch of bi-friendly folks and make a donation to the BRC, which provides support for bi people and bi issues around the world and especially in the Boston area. The Community Service Award will be presented to Andrew Rapp, Editor-in-Chief of *Bay Windows* for his great work on bi and trans inclusion in the paper. RSVP to houseparty@biresource.org; \$35 suggested contribution.

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shouting "The King! The King!" The next man caught him and held him tighter and longer—Theron felt the man's desire pressing hard against his thigh. He struggled and the man kissed him, biting his lips, before the shout went up and he was spun away to the arms of another—good god, it was Henry Fremont, hair disheveled and long face flushed. Fremont didn't kiss him. He gripped Theron's shoulders hard and stared at him with furious eyes, then flung him into the powerful arms of Justis Blake, who picked him right up off his feet and swung him around and around." (pg. 189)

Basil finds an ancient book—the lost Book of the King's Wizard. Fearful of the implications of possessing such an artifact, Basil is plagued by dreams of the glories of the past, of the training of the ancient kings for the trial where they proved their worthiness. But when he suspects Theron of hiding things from him, jealousy prompts him to try out a spell for uncovering hidden truths.

As Theron and Basil come closer to re-enacting the legends that could revive the monarchy, the powerful among the nobility and the leaders of the University take notice, culminating in an academic debate in which Basil attempts to prove that the wizards' magic is real.

Kushner and Sherman have created a richly detailed world in which bisexuality is not only accepted, it is an inherent part of the culture's heritage. The ancient kings engaged

in sacred sexual rites with their wizards and male companions, while also having relationships of varying longevity with women. The Northern students at the University keep up similar customs and introduce Basil's students to them. While there are gay, straight, and bisexual orientations among the men, the distinction is never given much significance. The invocation of a bisexual homo-erotically-centered religion and culture are compelling and addictive for anyone hungering for alternatives to the

heterocentric focus of modern religion, most mythology, and even most fantasy novels.

While the men take center stage in *The Fall of the Kings*, the book is also populated with a number of strong and developed female characters. Theron's mother, Sofia, a midwife from a faraway island, is a quiet revolutionary. She works to open up the University to female students and teaches surgery, all the while also caring for the poor and homeless in her neighborhood. Meanwhile Katherine, the Duchess of Tremontaine, is a formidable figure who can wield a sword as well as any man.

Most vivid is Theron's older half-sister Jessica, a ship captain described by some as a "pirate." Arriving toward the end of the book, she rescues Theron from an embarrassing and potentially dangerous situation by embarrassing him further—a skillful political ploy you have to read to fully appreciate. A colorful character, Jessica's eccentricities mean the nobility overlooks her.

Finally, there is Ysaud, the brilliant painter who was Theron's previous lover. She left him broken-hearted and marked with a tattoo of leaves upon his skin, his body the subject of a series of paintings that brought legends to life.

Seeing the paintings brings parts of the story full circle and works on a mythical level, bringing Theron closer to what he perceives to

Fall continues on next page

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For Those Who Say "I Don't"

Unmarried to Each Other: The Essential Guide to Living Together as an Unmarried Couple, by Dorian Solot and Marshall Miller, Marlowe and Company, 2002.

Reviewed by Annie Goglia

This book is chockful of useful information for any kind of unmarried couple (although I found it somewhat biased towards opposite-sex couples). Thoughtful and thorough, it touches on a wide variety of subjects such as how to figure out whether a couple is ready to live together, what to call an unmarried partner (they have a long list!), parenting while unmarried, legal issues, and how to deal with flack from people who don't accept cohabitation as a reasonable choice. They also include an interesting history of cohabitation. The book is not anti-marriage—they acknowledge most unmarried heterosexual couples do eventually get married—and have a chapter devoted to that decision-making process as well. *Unmarried to Each Other* is a great resource for those of us who decide—temporarily or long-term—that marriage is not for us. ▽

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be his destiny. Ysaud is also bisexual, and Jessica sleeps with her as a means of gaining access to her studio so she can negotiate to buy the paintings. Bringing together these women who frame the story—who stay mostly in the background but yet have an incredible amount of influence—hints at a theme that emerges at the end of the book. There is a possibility for women to hold power, perhaps by becoming wizards themselves, or at least by seeing with a clearer eye the potential of the old ways and the promise of the new.

Yes, the book ends on a slightly ambiguous note and leaves you wanting more. Kushner and Sherman are both busy with other projects, but I hope they return to this world soon. Perhaps to give us more of Jessica's story.

Other Books of Note:

Nekropolis, by Maureen McHugh (Eos, 2002)
McHugh is unique for writing beautiful,

character-driven science fiction about ordinary people in non-Western cultures. In *Nekropolis* she looks at a near-future Muslim world where "jessing" binds people to slavery and artificially constructed beings work as servants or prostitutes. What happens when a jessed woman falls in love with a construct? Fascinating—and too short.

The Best Democracy Money Can Buy, by Greg Palast (Plume, Penguin Books, 2003)

I haven't finished this yet, but I'm glad it's on my bookshelf. Palast is an investigative journalist whose reportings on the Florida 2000 vote count, Enron, and other topics of importance goes far beyond what you'll find in the American press. Check out his website (www.gregpalast.com) for other reporting and current events.

Honorable mention:

It's not a book, but if you know someone with a tape of HBO's "Angels in America," which aired in December, watch it. I never saw the play, but the story still rings true and the acting and writing are marvelous. I hope this comes out on tape and DVD in the near future. ▽

Women of Color Couples Sought for Book

Are you a female couple of color that has been together as family a minimum of five years? If you and your partner are living as family with/without children, I want your story. It would be encouraging to hear stories of 10, 20, and 30 years together. If you and your partner would like to share your lives with us, please submit your story of love, joy, pain, and survival. Selected families will become part of a book created to support the gay family structure. Couples must be willing to be interviewed and have photographs taken. Please submit a letter that states your interest and tells the beauty of your relationship to joyner1@starpower.net, P.O. Box 36342 Washington, DC 20020, or contact Lisa Joyner at 202-610-4036. Stories must be submitted by March 1, 2004.

Same-sex Marriage on the Common

By Beth Bishop

Imagine this scenario: you find your soul mate, you fall in love. You want more than anything to get married and spend the rest of your life with her or him. Instead, you are told that what you are doing is sinful, and that "people like you" shouldn't get married or perhaps shouldn't even be together. You get weird stares and nasty looks anytime you are in public and want to express your affection (even if it is something as innocent as holding hands)

Whatever. You go on about your business, until the phone rings with a disturbing call. Your loved one has gotten into a serious car accident. You rush to the hospital, and run up to the front desk. You ask to see him or her; the receptionist looks at you funny and asks if you are immediate family. No, you say, but you plead with them to just let you see her or him. It's not going to happen. Now, imagine that your girlfriend or boyfriend died. You have no say on what happens to the body, or what happens to their possessions.

Does this picture sound wrong and unjust? This affects [at least] 10% of the population on a daily basis. Oh, do I mean the GAY population? Yes, I do. I also mean bisexuals, transgendered people, and lesbians. Civil marriage, available only to heterosexual couples, grants people 1049 legal rights and benefits on the national level, and approximately 350 on the state level. These rights

include tax breaks, hospital visitation rights, health care benefits—the list goes on and on. So here's the great deal our government has given the queer community: make them pay their taxes, don't grant them the same benefits that straight married couples take for granted, and make life as complicated as possible. That's right, folks, have your discrimination and pay for it, too!

On October 31, a few weeks before the Massachusetts ruling, I went with my buddies Laura and Matt to downtown Boston to collect signatures for the Equalmarriage.org petition that is against the Defense of Marriage amendment and supports civil marriage. We went to their headquarters and received a short briefing. Our mission: walk around the Boston Common and collect signatures from anyone and everyone.

As we walked out to the common, there was a man standing next to the Park Street T-Station preaching about the "sins of homosexuality." I thought to myself sarcastically, "Wow. This is a great place to try to get signatures." But I was wrong. It *was* a great place. I first approached an African-American couple sitting on a park bench. They weren't sure at first whether or not to sign the petition.

They said, "Well, we're Baptists, and our church really doesn't support that."

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Internship Working with Queer Youth

Project 10 East, Inc., a Somerville-based grassroots nonprofit organization, is seeking interns or volunteers for the spring semester. Project 10 East is dedicated to starting and sustaining gay/straight alliances in Massachusetts high schools and creating safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth. Interns will be expected to volunteer at least one afternoon a week for at least approximately four hours. Interns will also be encouraged to attend a weekly discussion meeting regarding the progress of the program and organization. Project 10 East will not pay interns; however, your school may provide stipends/work-study funding. For more information on Project 10 East, please check out www.project10east.org. If you are interested please contact Ashlee Reed, Executive Director at Project 10 East at 617-864-GLBT or project10east@aol.com.

Bisexuals Celebrate Massachusetts Ruling

On November 18, 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court declared that the commonwealth needed to remedy the discriminatory laws that prevented same-sex couples from receiving the benefits of marriage. Hundreds of GLBT supporters and allies gathered that night to celebrate and honor the work the community had done to achieve this great advancement. Former BiWomen editor Linda Blair gave the following speech that night to acknowledge the unique perspective of bisexuals in this struggle.

I want to thank and congratulate all of you for your part in helping to make this day possible! And to thank and remember all the bisexuals, gay men, lesbians, transmen, transwomen, intersexed people, and allies, who stood firm at Stonewall and have battled ever since, so that we can stand here today.



Bisexuals celebrating the SJC's marriage decision at the GLAD Victory Party.

As a longtime activist with the Bisexual Resource Center in Boston, I want to share with you why this day is especially historic for the bisexual community in Massachusetts.

For far too long, Cupid, and Cupid alone, has been the one to determine which bisexuals could opt to marry and which ones could not. Fall in love with a man and you can get married, fall in love with a woman and you can't. Or vice versa.

Well, don't get me wrong, I'm a big fan of Cupid. But Cupid should not be able to decide that this family gets the benefits of marriage while that family will just have to do without them. It's arbitrary, and it's wrong!

So I want to commend the justices who showed the wisdom, and the courage, to wrench that arbitrary power away from Cupid, or more accurately, from the state of Massachusetts, and to put it where it belongs, firmly in the hands of the individual. And I want to thank the members of the Massachusetts State Legislature in advance for, sometime in the next 180 days, doing their job as laid out in the decision today by dotting the i's and crossing the t's.

In conclusion, I think I speak for bisexuals across Massachusetts when I say that I feel extremely lucky to live in a state where, finally, every individual, of every sexual orientation, can choose whether or not to marry their very own Mr. or Ms. Right! ▽

To Marry or Not To Marry, Is That The Question?

By Linda Blair

There's something rotten in the state of Massachusetts. From the moment on November 18, 2003 that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that our state constitution guarantees same sex couples the right to marry, the decision has suffered slings and arrows from every corner of the political spectrum.

Mitt Romney, the Republican governor, immediately called a press conference to announce what an outrage this was and what he would do to protect "3,000 years of recorded history." That would be a history of exclusion, of course. Thomas Reilly, the Democratic state attorney general, quickly decried the ruling because "such profound

social policy should have been decided by the Legislature, not the courts." Then, after Reilly had a chance to read the decision he was sure there was enough "wiggle room" in it to continue denying same-sex couples the right to marry so long as the state legislature cobbled together some sort of legislation providing some of its benefits. No doubt you will be shocked to know that Reilly is exploring the option of challenging Romney for governor in 2006.

Both Romney and Reilly, along with plenty of other politicians, would have you believe that civil unions will give you the same status as marriage without interfering with their future plans to get elected to public office.

Don't believe them. There are some stark differences between civil unions and marriage.

One of the most important differences is that "unioned" couples won't have any legal standing to insist that the federal government treat them as it does married couples. The federal government currently offers well over a thousand benefits of marriage, most notably giving surviving spouses access to their late spouses' Social Security pension, a benefit that routinely spells the difference between a decent life and dire poverty for millions of seniors. Another is the right to travel across state lines without losing legal recognition of your relationship and the rights that come with it. Massachusetts is a nice place, after all, but would you really want to be trapped in it for the rest of your life?

Same-sex marriage does have a few friends among those running for higher office, but unless Dennis Kucinich or Al Sharpton can pull off some kind of miracle, the Democratic presidential nominee will not be one of them. All of the other candidates, the ones with any realistic chance of winning the nomination, are against the idea.

Howard Dean, who signed the nation's first and only civil union law as governor of Vermont, has said that as president he would push for federal recognition of civil unions, but that marriage is essentially a religious thing and we shouldn't mess with it. John Kerry supports civil unions but doesn't want to rock the vote beyond that. John Edwards and Joe Lieberman don't quite feel comfortable going out on the civil unions limb, but support "tolerance" along with some type of domestic partnership benefits. Wesley Clark says simply that each state should decide on its own what to do.

The unwillingness of the non-fringe Democratic contenders to endorse same-sex marriage should come as no surprise when you consider the position of President Bush, who has said publicly that "If necessary, I will support a constitutional amendment which would honor marriage between a man and a woman" and, of course, ban any that aren't. That Federal Marriage Amendment was introduced into congress in December. The administration's current position is the dire opposite of its pre-election policy as stated in the 2000 vice-presidential debate by Dick Cheney, another father of a lesbian daughter, that "That matter is regulated by the states."

Although clearly hypocritical and homophobic, in this reelection season the administration has restrained from using any hellfire and brimstone language to condemn "homosexuals" or the SJC ruling, in favor of kinder and gentler biblical metaphors. This velvet glove approach is naturally not sitting well

with the administration's right wing backers, who want to slam the ruling with an iron fist and knock us all back into the closet, or perhaps "ex-gay" reparation therapy, while they're at it.

Since November, Massachusetts has been flooded with right wing "ground troops," who have come to set up camp on the doorstep of the State House in an attempt to smash the marriage ruling to smithereens. Various groups are busy organizing "town meetings," clergy forums, and even a "marriage summit" in an attempt to deny any and all recognition of same-sex relationships. They are, of course, joined by Boston Archbishop Sean O'Malley and the rest of the Catholic hierarchy who, ironically enough, are now deeply worried about the affect that same-sex marriage might have on the children of Massachusetts. Gee, too bad it took the most significant civil rights achievement in decades to get them to think of child welfare.

Even many politicians who have been supportive of LGBT rights for their whole careers feel that marriage just goes too far and feel some type of civil union compromise is in order. Uncertain whether or not the SJC would consider a civil union law an adequate remedy to its ruling, the state senate has officially asked the court for an advisory opinion to answer the question.

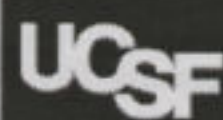
If you live in Massachusetts and ever want the choice for yourself or anyone else to marry a same-sex sweetie, give your legislators a call right away and tell them to vote against any so called "Defense of Marriage Act" anti-gay constitutional amendments, and that civil unions won't cut it because separate is not equal. If you don't know who your state legislators are, you can find out at www.wheredoivotema.com or 1-888-VOTE-SMART. Call both your state rep and state senator today, even if you think it won't do any good. Your elected officials need to hear from you. You can also keep up to date about what's going on, get involved further and donate greatly needed funds to stave off these attacks at www.massequality.org. ▽

Volunteers Needed for Helpline

The GLBT Helpline and the Peer Listening Line of Fenway Community Health provide information, referral, and support to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender callers through its toll-free nationwide lines and they are seeking new volunteers. If you self identify as GLBT, have 5 hours per month to spare, and are looking for a way to help the community then email program coordinator Jim Maynard at jmaynard@fenwayhealth.org or call 617-927-6242. The Line is especially in need of women, bisexual, and transgender volunteers. A new volunteer training begins in February. Be the voice that answers our community's call!

Are you a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender Smoker?

Do you want to quit smoking?



Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco are looking for LGBT smokers to take part in an Internet-based smoking treatment program.

For more information, visit our website at <http://iquit.medschool.ucsf.edu>

BBWN Wants Your Used Books, CDs, VHS tapes, and DVDs!

Long-time member Gail Zacharias is helping BBWN with fundraising by listing used books, etc. on various online channels. 40% of the sale price will be donated to BBWN. If you have books to donate, please bring them to the BRC office, or contact Robyn (ochs@bi.org, 617-413-2717) to arrange for book transfer. The books must be in reasonably good shape—in particular, all pages must be present and readable (some highlighting and underlining is ok if it doesn't obscure the text), and the cover must be present and firmly attached to the pages (it's ok for the dust jacket of a hardcover to be missing). And the books mustn't be smelly (e.g. musty or smoky), since Gail will be storing them in her home!

THANKS THIS MONTH TO THE GENEROUS BOOK GIVERS BELOW:

Gabrie'l Atchison,
Robin Bessler, Kate
Griffin, Sonny Ochs,
Robyn Ochs,
Ann and Kate, Ellyn
Ruthstrom

BBWN Financial Statement 1/1-03 through 12/31/03

Balance forward 1/1/03:	\$ 2063.70	Income	
Expenses		Dues	950.00
Printing	1533.22	Merchandise	1212.39
Postal fees & postage	801.55	Bank Interest	6.68
Supplies	44.15	Donations	175.00
Merchandise purchased	464.35	Event income	0
Event expenses	71.50	Advertising	125.00
Total expenses	\$ 2914.77	Book project income	1730.78
		Total income:	\$ 4199.85
		Balance as of 12/31/03	\$ 3348.78

Hey, Bi Women: Congratulations! Thanks largely to the book project (don't forget: we want YOUR used books!) we have a positive net income for 2003. Let's keep up the good work: donate your books, or donate money!

Remember, BBWN is important! At 21, we are the oldest bi women's group in the world, and Bi Women is the second oldest continuous bi publication in the world (after Bi Nieuws in the Netherlands). We have no paid staff, and no regular sources of income. We have a longstanding policy of making Bi Women available to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay, and the newsletter is given away at conferences and other public venues, and is mailed free of charge to many colleges and other community organizations. For many women, Bi Women is their first affirmation of bisexuality.

Checks can be sent to BBWN or, if you wish your donation to be tax deductible, you may channel it through our parent organization, BRC (both groups: P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge MA 02140) — be sure to put "for BBWN" in the comment line. ▽

Submitted by Robyn Ochs, Treasurer for BBWN since 1989

Common from page 7

I then quickly explained the difference between civil and religious marriage. That changed everything. It became a civil rights issue, rather than a moral issue. They signed.

I approached two men sitting near the fountain eating sushi. I asked them if they would be willing to sign, and they were OVERJOYED. One of them, looked up and said, "Of course, honey. We have been married for seven years. It's about goddamn time we get our rights. This is a great thing that you are doing. I didn't even know young people were interested in this. It's good to see kids your age involved." Whoa.

All of a sudden I felt really good about what I was doing. Maybe this could actually help to make a change. I realized the importance of just getting involved. I spent only 3 hours of my day petitioning. If everyone just contributed a little bit of time, just think about how much can get done.

I went up to some homeless men. They were VERY eager to ask me questions. They had a lot of misconceptions on the issue, and when I set their facts straight, they were more than willing to sign. Laura and Matt walked over, and looked very concerned that I was

getting harassed, or as Laura put it, "hate-crimes." But, I was just having a great time talking to these guys who most people just walk past or ignore. One of the men made sure that I wrote on his petition that he wanted to volunteer and help. Whoa.

There were a few people who looked at me with disdain, and said "I'm sorry, I don't support that." But there were more people who approached me and asked if they could sign. I was so surprised with how much support there was out there. I expected to have a really hard afternoon fighting for signatures, but in fact it was the opposite.

Actions like this are very necessary to spread education, and get rid of misconceptions. I think I changed a few people's minds. I'm really glad I did it. I am going to continue to be involved through Emerge, the new gay rights activism organization at Tufts University.

A version of this article appeared in Radix, a Tufts University student magazine. Beth is a student at Tufts, and she, Laura, and Matt are currently enrolled in Robyn Ochs's class on "The Gay Agenda." ▽

CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

in Harvard Square, Cambridge. As the name suggests, it's vegetarian food. T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

March 1 ♦ Monday

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-8:45 p.m. at Fenway Community Health, 7 Haviland St., Boston. See February 2nd.

March 2 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "What Men Think About Bi Women." See February 3rd.

March 3 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See February 4th.

March 7 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Bowling, noon. Gather at Lanes & Games on Rt. 2 in Cambridge for a few strings of bowling and then we'll find a local eatery for a bite to eat afterwards.

Contact Ellyn at nellythrustmor@aol.com if you'd like to meet up with the group.

March 9 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. See February 10th.

March 10 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. All bi community members welcome. See February 11th.

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-8:45 p.m. at the Diesel Cafe. See February 11th.

March 16 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. The topic is: "Can't we just be friends? Or: just because I'm bisexual, doesn't mean I have to have sex with every intimate friend." See February 3rd.

March 18 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See February 4th.

March 19 ♦ Friday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Lesbian and Bisexual Women: Can We Talk?" See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA, 02140 or e-mail to nellythrustmor@aol.com.



This group is intended as a supportive environment to talk about poly-related issues in your life, to ask questions, or just to hear what other people have to say. At Fenway Community Health, 7 Haviland Street, Boston.

March 28 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1:00 p.m. Enjoy delicious vegetarian food at Buddha's Delight in Boston's Chinatown. On Beach Street between Harrison and Washington. Nearest T stop is Chinatown on the Orange Line. Note: Buddha's Delight has returned to its original ground-floor location.

March 30 ♦ Tuesday

BiWomen mailing, 7 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Help BBWN get the newsletter out to women around the country. Socialize during and after, when we'll head to Central Square for a cuppa.

THINK AHEAD!!

April 25 ♦ Sunday

March for Women's Lives, Washington, D.C. Join hundreds of thousands of people who believe that women have the right to choose if, when, and how to have children. In this election year, it's an important time to stand together and voice a pro-woman, pro-sex, and pro-choice perspective.



Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Saturdays: Dancing at Hollywood KTV, 41 Essex Street, Chinatown T, Boston. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. \$10 cover.

Sundays: Queer night, 9 p.m.-1 a.m., the Milky Way, 403 Centre St, Jamaica Plain. DJ and dance floor.

Thursdays: Dyke Night at the Midway Cafe, 3496 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain. Pool table 8-10, DJ with dancing 10-2.



SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for *BiWomen*
(sliding scale)

___ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)

___ \$20-\$30 (suggested)

___ \$30-\$100 Extra Special Donor

___ Renewal

___ New Subscriber

BiWomen wants you!!!

NAME _____

DRESS _____

BBWN, P.O. BOX 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Tuesdays:

Married Bi Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: 617-354-8807.

First Wednesdays, Third Thursdays:

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

CALENDAR

February 2 ♦ Monday

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-8:45 p.m. at Fenway Community Health, 7 Haviland St., Boston. Meetings range from social chatting to more in-depth discussions. Contact Rosa@homeport.org.

February 3 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. A discussion group for bisexual, bi-friendly, and questioning women. Topic: "Favorite Boston area hotspots and happenings: bi-friendly coffeehouses, nightclubs, etc. We'll also discuss Bi events and groups." Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

February 4 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

February 8 ♦ Sunday

Bisexual Resource Center's Third Annual Winter House Party, 2-5 p.m. Please join us at BRC Board member Sheeri Kritzer's home (39 Pearl St., Watertown, near Watertown Square). All are invited. Hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages will be served. Come schmooze with a bunch of bi-friendly folks and make a donation to the BRC, which provides support for bi people and bi issues around the world and especially in the Boston area. Our Community Service Award will be presented to Andrew Rapp, Editor-in-Chief of *Bay Windows* for his great work on bi and trans inclusion in the paper. RSVP to houseparty@biresource.org; \$35 suggested contribution.



February 10 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. A support group for bi and lesbian women who are married or in long-term relationships. Contact Denise at dpp1029@aol.com for information. Call 617-354-8807 for directions.

February 11 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. All bi community members are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meeting is at the Living Center at 29 Stanhope Street in Back Bay.

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-8:45 p.m. at the Diesel Cafe, 257 Elm Street in Somerville. Contact dalbino83@excite.com.

February 15 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Brunch at Lucy's in Belmont, Noon. Please bring a potluck dish and drinks to share. E-mail Lucy at LucyLizard@yahoo.com or call her at 617-484-5964 for directions and to let her know you will be coming.

February 17 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "How Do You Describe Your Bisexuality to Other People?" See February 3rd.

February 19 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-9 p.m. See February 4th.

February 20 ♦ Friday

New Voices Open Mic, 7:30 p.m. Open mic format and a supportive audience for women and their allies at the Center for New Words at 186 Hampshire St., Cambridge. Poetry and prose welcome. 5- and 10-minute slots available. 7:15 sign-up, 7:30 start. \$5 at the door. For more info, contact 617-876-5310, www.centerfornewwords.org.

February 21 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Brunch will be at Doyle's at 3484 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain, between the Green Street and Forest Hills stops on the Orange Line. The number at Doyle's is 617-524-2345.

February 23 ♦ Monday

Mixed Gender Poly Support Group, 6:30-8:45 p.m. This group is intended as a supportive environment to talk about poly-related issues in your life, to ask questions, or just to hear what other people have to say. At Fenway Community Health.

Judy Glick, M.Ed., LMHC
licensed psychotherapist for lesbians,
gays, and bisexuals

- Enhancing self-esteem
- Recovery from incest/abuse
- Coming out
- Relationship and family issues
- Depression and anxiety
- Transitions and career change

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Bi Women and Lesbians: *Can We Talk?*



A selection of bi women and lesbians: (from left) Melissa Etheridge, Me'shell Ndegeocello, Drew Barrymore, June Jordan, Audre Lorde.

My Journey with Bisexuality

By Gina Siesing

Boston is the first place I've lived since college where a critical mass of people celebrate bisexuality and where people have educated themselves in rich ways about multiple sexualities and about the importance of questioning and of coalition building. I appreciate the strength and the diversity of BBWN and the Boston bi/queer community.

I came out first as a lesbian at age 15. One of the first people I came out to was my high school boyfriend. He, ever the adventurer, was intrigued. For me the relationship with David was one of friendship and sexual exploration, but not one where I felt emotionally drawn at a deep level, and this was common for me in dating boys. The sex was consensual in an almost business-like way. We liked each other and enjoyed physical play and discovery together, but the potential for intimacy was very limited. With women I've always felt capacity for intimacy at all the levels that matter to me, and for this reason I have identified as "lesbian" for most of my life.

There were two years during college when I identified as "bi," and those two years involved several painful, maddening, enlightening experiences across the lesbian/bi divide of that time and

Journey continues on page 5

Bi-Lesbian Dialogues at Bi Rap

By Lucy Lizard

As the facilitator of the Bisexual Women's Rap Group, I can tell you some things about the tension between bi women and lesbians. A little over a year ago, the bi rap group was discussing how lesbians and bi women relate. Some rappers had heard lesbians or queer women say that bi women were not to be trusted, flighty, that they would never date a bi woman, and she would leave you for a man. Other stereotypes abounded. On the other hand, some rappers new to the gay world wanted to know more about lesbianism.

Some of the women in the bi rap group said that they sometimes go to the lesbian rap group. How did the lesbian rap group react to bisexual women in their midst? Well, I'm not sure if anyone at lesbian rap explicitly identified themselves as bisexual. The lesbian rap group has plenty of women who are "coming out"; exploring their attractions to women. Perhaps those women were understood to be exploring.

Personally, I identify as bisexual and not as lesbian, so I don't feel comfortable

Dialogue continues on page 4

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Volunteers of the Month

Gail Zacharias

Robyn Ochs

Deb Morley

Wayne Bryant

Katrina

Gina Giesing

Steph Miserlis

Annie Gogle

Sheeri Kritzer

Dawn Dreisbach

Lani Ka'ahumanu

And many more
fabulous people!
You know who
you are!

BiWomen is published bi-monthly.

Editor:

Ellyn Ruthstrom

**Printed on
recycled paper**

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

New Ideas, Spring Energy!

Welcome to spring, bi women! All those signs of new life, flowers budding, the seasonal shift of clothes, the libido perks up, the young women wearing sports bras on the dance floor. Ah, spring is here.

And that means Pride is just around the corner. One of the Rites of Pride for the bi community is the Pre-Pride brunch hosted by BBWN. Last year it didn't happen but this year it'll be back and it should be a wonderful time. We actually have some money to cater the brunch this year, which cuts down a lot on organizing and set up time, and we can look forward to a really delicious spread.

Would you like to be part of organizing the brunch this year? We'll be having a planning/brainstorming meeting on Tuesday, April 27th at the BRC office at 29 Stanhope Street, 4th floor. Along with the brunch we'll be discussing ideas for holding a bi women's event in Boston in the coming months and envision what that could look like. It would be great to have a good turnout to come up with some creative ideas.

One idea that has been tossed around and which seems appropriate to this issue's theme, is to co-sponsor an event with a local lesbian organization. This could be a really great community builder and a chance for women to perhaps meet each other in a more supportive atmosphere. Lots to think about.

Although those of us in the community who have been able to attend some of the State House actions about equal marriage rights know that there are LOTS of bi people being active on this issue, (see Robyn's article on page 6) we don't always get the recognition we deserve for our political work. If you are doing work out there, make sure that people know that the bi community is working hard in this civil rights battle. And remember to be inclusive in your language when discussing the issue. As a bi woman I'm not fighting for the right to a "gay marriage," but rather I'm fighting for all of us to have equal access to marriage rights. I'll say "I do" to that.

Ellyn Ruthstrom

NEXT IN *BiWOMEN*

The *BiWomen* theme for
June/July is:

Bi Politics: Local, National,
International

If you are bi then your politics are bi politics. What are your thoughts on the current national political scene? What's going on in your local queer political scene? Is there anything going on out there *besides* the fight for marriage rights?

Deadline: May 14, 2004

FUTURE ISSUES

August/September

Anyone's Guess!

Send your suggestions for future topics to
nellythrustmor@aol.com

PLEASE SUBMIT TO *BiWOMEN* !

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,
black-and-white art, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to

NellyThrustmor@aol.com

**If you do not want your name
published, please tell us.**

All articles and art appearing in
this newsletter are copyrighted
by the authors and artists.



Lucy had a full house for her brunch in February. See the calendar on pages 11-12 for upcoming BBWN brunches and other activities.

Brunch Coordinator Wants You to Host!

BBWN potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area. We try to hold a brunch in a member's home each month so that people can relax and share food and experiences in a safe space. Deb Morley is the brunch coordinator, so please contact her at debmo345@comcast.net if you are interested in hosting a brunch. Thanks Deb for volunteering! And check out the calendar on pages 11-12 for the brunches and other activities coming up in April and May. Hope you can join us.

Bisexual & Transgender Added to *Bay Windows* Tagline

Hello all:

Andrew Rapp here, Editor-in-Chief of *Bay Windows*. I wanted to make folks aware of a change happening with our paper this week.

With this week's issue, released March 11, we have changed the paper's tagline to read "New England's Largest Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Newspaper." This change was made to reflect our belief that the paper serves

all members of our community. A little background on the change:

Since my start as editor we've made a goal of improving the paper's poor record of covering the bi and trans communities. It has been our plan to signify this change in our tagline, but we've struggled with the right wording. We've sought a tagline that encom-

passes all identities, is descriptive, and is hopefully inspirational.

We may still do a more radical overhaul of the tagline, but in the meantime it was inappropriate not to update the current tagline to specifically include bisexual and transgendered people.

I hope readers are pleased with this change and provide us with any feedback they may have. ▽

Thanks,
Andrew Rapp
Editor-in-Chief
Bay Windows
arapp@baywindows.com



BRC board members at their February House Party honored *Bay Windows*' Editor-in-Chief Andrew Rapp with their annual Community Service Award.

International Bi Conference Ready to Book Rooms

The Eight International Conference on Bisexuality will be held August 5-8, 2004 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The conference organizers have announced that the Holiday Inn Metrodome has been chosen as the official conference hotel in the heart of the Five Corners and West Bank of Minneapolis. Special conference hotel rates will be \$98 a night through July 1st, 2004, and is available by contacting the Holiday Inn Metrodome at 612-333-4646 or visiting www.metrodome.com and using conference code ICB. The conference planning committee also announced the securing of dormitory rooms on Campus for interested attendees. Rates will be \$32 to \$37 a day for accommodations in one of three on-campus dorms. Dorm information and registration is available on line at www.8ICB.org. For more information or to register, visit www.8icb.org, or call 612-825-4400

Finding the Bis in "The L Word"

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

I realize I can get very serious very easily when I start to talk about bi women and lesbians. There's all that biphobia I've seen and heard about, all the stereotypes that have sometimes kept the groups at arm's length, and all the sex and love that gets exchanged between our hearts and in the sheets. There's a lot of serious stuff there, but instead I decided to hop into a review of "The L Word" and look at how lesbians and bi women are getting along together in popular culture.

I've been watching "The L Word," courtesy of my friend Kate who tapes it and keeps all of her basic cable friends up to speed. I feel I have a healthy disrespect for the show, but I still can't help myself from looking forward to popping the tape into the VCR. What are those queer women up to now—and of course, who is going to sleep with who next.

If you have read some of the media buzz about the show (or seen the show yourself), you already know that all the women are hot and skinny and don't look like "the typical" lesbian or bi woman. (I think there are plenty

of hot women in the queer community but they still don't look like these women.) First of all, my major complaint, where are the butches? I imagine they are trying to appeal to the mass market (including all the straight men who want to dig the girl-on-girl action) so the women have to look femmy. Which is a damn shame for those of us who have an appreciation for rougher cut women.

There are a lot of things I don't relate to at all on the show. But one of the things that I like a lot is how one of the main characters (Alice, a magazine writer) is bi and she is seen as just "one of the gay girls." In fact, Alice is often the ringleader of the group and the webmistress of The Flow Chart that details how all the women they know are interrelated in a web of past relationships. One thing I didn't like was how her bi identity was initially revealed as a reaction to having a woman treat her badly so she was going to try men, instead of a conscious positive identity.

The other potentially bi character (I say

The L Word continues on page 10

Dialogue from page 1

going to a "lesbian rap." Maybe that's just me, and if lesbians want to have a group just for lesbians that's ok with me. However, some bi women wanted the lesbian rap group to be open to all women, including bi women. That lesbian rap group sure sounds intriguing! And who are they, anyway, to say what lesbian means for everyone? Maybe there are different definitions. Someone in the group said perhaps "lesbian" could mean a woman who loves other women. I think it used to be that way in the 70's.


It sounded like it would be nice to meet on neutral ground and talk this all over: lesbians, bi women, and women of any label or no label at all. But who was going to organize such a meeting, find a room, a date, publicize it, etc.? No one volunteered. Finally, I saw a partial solution: we could invite any woman to bi rap, especially those from lesbian rap, to come to our group and start a dialogue about all this.

The meeting that resulted, on March 4, 2003, was the largest bi rap I have ever been to! About 20 women crammed into a room with 3 couches, some women sitting on the floor. We went around the room, and one by one everyone told us their name, maybe a little

history, and their label if any (lesbian, queer, bisexual, etc.). By having each women tell her personal story, we came to understand how different we all are in our sexual attractions and experience. Women explained why they chose each label for themselves, or why they didn't want any label. I tried to stay away from abstractions like definitions or theory at this initial meeting, and instead focused on personal experience. By the end of the session however, the conversation got heated. Apparently, in lesbian rap, they don't have a "one person talking at a time" rule!

Since there was so much more to say, I scheduled another meeting to invite all women, especially those from lesbian rap, to continue the dialogue. On April 15, 2003, we discussed stereotypes of lesbian and bisexual women. We asked each other questions, like "Why don't some lesbians want to date bi women?"

Since then, women from lesbian rap continue to attend bi rap. I'll note that we are one of the few groups at the Women's Center that welcome all women. So the dialogue continues.

Coming up May 18 (by request), the topic is "Lesbian-Bisexual Dialogue." 

Journey from page 1

place. When I first arrived at Swarthmore College and found my way to the established queer community, there were two separate student groups: the "Gay and Lesbian Union" (GLU) and the "Bisexual and Questioning Circle" (BQC). These two groups were known collectively as "GLUBQC" (pronounced "glub-quick"), and they would work and talk together, but those who identified as bi were considered more akin to the uncertain "questioners" than they were to the other "stable" identifications: gay and lesbian. This seemed bizarre and prejudiced to me and to others in the groups, and we reformed as the "Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Union" and the "Questioning Circle." Since those college days, I've come to appreciate and value questioning itself as a viable way of living, as a sustainable and very fruitful practice—a way of living an examined life and opening to one's truth as that truth unfolds and changes over time.

I participated in the struggle at Swarthmore College to have "Bisexual" included in the name of our Sager Committee on Lesbian and Gay Studies. My lover at the time was identifying as "bi," and so was I. We both served on the Sager Committee and would need to make strong arguments to our fellow committee members, including senior faculty who were fairly conservative politically and who were biased against the name change. In preparation for the meeting, I asked my lover to talk with me about what bisexuality meant to her. The phobia and disdain directed against bisexual folks by members of "our" gay and lesbian community was so powerful, and Fran had internalized it so deeply, that she was afraid to talk openly even with me about what it meant to her to identify as bisexual. This was an eye-opening experience for me. As an aside, we did vote to change the name, but only because Harvard had recently included "Bisexual" in the name of its official organizations, and our senior faculty saw this as a persuasive precedent.

Through intimate, heated discussions with friends and lovers in college, I came to understand how unsettling "bisexuality" could be for others. When I told my first female lover that I was identifying as bi, she said, "You don't have to be gay. I'll be gay for both of us." Oy! Another lover insisted, "Oh, come on: you're a dyke!"—which, in our common parlance at the time, meant: "You're not bisexual. You're a lesbian—a real dyke...." A close friend and fellow activist also told me during this period, "You can't identify as bi. You have to identify as a dyke because it's more political!" To which I would respond, "Isn't it 'more political' to

name ourselves with labels that are as close as possible to describing who we are so that we win our rights on those terms?!"

These were among the attempts at resolving my identity by lovers and friends insecure about what my bisexuality or my questioning might mean for them. I have always found this impulse to define others—especially to define others as "just like" ourselves—more than a little pathetic. It's very clear to me that the defining impulse stems from the would-be definer's lack of security in who they are. Rather than taking this insecurity as an invitation to get curious about their own complexity, would-be definers try to bolster their own precarious self-definition by placing others in a box. One of the tremendous gifts I find among bisexual folks is a real interest in exploring and accepting the complexities of desire, of life choices, and of self-definition, as well as the understanding that desire, choice, and definition are dynamic processes, not stagnant things.

I identify these days as lesbian, and I also use the words "queer" and "dyke" (now happily understood in a more inclusive sense!) to describe myself. One of the gifts in my life now is the chance to reflect on my own journey to awareness around and through the lens of bisexuality and other self-identifications I've explored over time. In my current relationships with people of all sexualities, I appreciate the ways that we each relate to our own transformations and identifications over time, and the ways that we share our stories to affirm complexities of desire, relationship, life, and love. May rich questioning, respectful sharing of experience, and appreciation for complexity and diversity expand through all the Circles of our community and our world! ▼

Same-sex Marriage Survey

A lesbian researcher is seeking members of the LGBT community to participate in a study about how the LGBT community thinks and feels about legalizing same-sex marriage. Participants complete a brief and anonymous web survey. This is a research survey, not a poll. To participate, please go to: monticello.bc.edu/phpESP/public/survey.php?name=lgbtssmarriage. For more information, contact: Pamela J. Lannutti, Ph.D., Department of Communication, Boston College, 140 Commonwealth Ave., Chestnut Hill, MA 02467, 617-552-6477.



Denise hosted the January brunch where guests sat around the fireplace and were treated to fresh crepes made by Stephanie.

The Network/La Red Benefit

Join The Network for Battered Lesbians and Bisexual Women for their 15th Anniversary Gala Fundraiser, Paint the Town (La) Red: A Celebration of Survival. The benefit will be held on Saturday, April 17, 7 p.m. at the Park Plaza Hotel, 64 Arlington St. in Boston. The event will feature performances by Dorothy Allison, author of *Bastard Out of Carolina*, and writer/performer Mónica Palacios, named one of OUT Magazine's "OUT 100" 2002. The evening will begin with an art show with local artists, followed by an elegant dinner, entertainment, and concluding the night with dancing with DJ Mocha D. Creative black tie attire. Tickets are \$100.00 per person. For tickets call 617-695-0877, email benefit@thenetworklared.org or visit www.thenetworklared.org.

REPORT FROM THE FRONT: The Massachusetts Constitutional Convention

By Robyn Ochs

I spent 16 hours at the Massachusetts State House yesterday, at the Constitutional Convention, day #3. In November, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decided that same-sex couples are—in the state's constitution—entitled to equal marriage rights. This decision explicitly used the "m-word," and contained strong language that "separate but equal" was not what they had in mind. They gave the legislature 180 days to make this so. Our legislature, whose House is headed by Tom "the dictator" Finneran wasn't too happy about this. They whined "Can't we just give them civil unions?" (This notwithstanding the fact that year after year Finneran has refused to allow the same-sex partners of state employees to even have access to family health plans and has resolutely squashed every attempt to bring legislation forward on this issue.) Several weeks later, the Supreme Judicial Court affirmed its earlier decision, basically saying: "READ OUR LIPS: WE SAID MARRIAGE."

So then the politicians decided to convene an emergency Constitutional Convention to try to amend the state Constitution (which is, incidentally, the oldest constitution in the United States). The process in Massachusetts is that an amendment has to be agreed upon, passed (unchanged) in two consecutive legislative sessions, and then in the third session it would go to "the people" for a popularity contest. So equal marriage begins in Massachusetts on May 17th, and the soonest marriage could possibly be made illegal is in November 2006.

The Constitutional Convention ("ConCon") met for two days last month, and failed to achieve a majority on any of the three bills proposed. This was good, as no agreement means that the court's decision stands. They recessed and came back yesterday to continue. I was there, and so were a lot of other bi activists. I am very proud of Boston's bi community. Our very own Linda Blair, in

particular, has been a key organizer. And lots of other bi folks and our families have been involved over the past weeks: Maura, Noel, Carla, Megan, Gavi, Sue, Charnan, Sarah, Mia, Lisa, Pepper, Bijan, Buzz, Peg...to mention just a few of the folks I have run into at the State House.

I was quite shaken at the State House—there is a lot of hate out there aimed at us. There were the usual crazies with their "Got AIDS Yet?", "God Abhors Gays," "Homosexuals are possessed by demons" signs. Creepy. But personally, the most disturbing kind of hate I experienced was those smarmy self-righteous creeps who smiled and said "We don't hate you. We love you. Jesus loves you...blah blah blah." I hate that self-righteous "love the sinner, hate the sin" garbage.



Long-time BBWN members Megan (left) and Carla (right) hold up signs at one of many equal marriage demos at the State House.

At one point I entered a crowd of Christians stood with my "no discrimination in the Constitution" sign held high, faced these folks, and kept making eye contact with them. The woman in front of me shoved me and kept trying to hold her sign in front of mine. Luckily, I had two signs, so I just held one up in each hand. There was a child with them, a boy of about 10 or 11 who was chanting with them, screaming, and it made me so sad. I wanted to talk to him and say "Don't let your parents teach you to hate," but I knew that was not an option. The two women directly in front of me were muttering and playing with and holding up their beads (praying, I guess...?).

We counter-chanted them for about an hour. They were shouting "One woman, one man, let the people vote." We were chanting back "No discrimination in the constitution." Finally, their buses must have been leaving, as almost all of them left en masse.

One of the most disturbing moments for me was running into one of my neighbors who until very recently ran a local business that I used to patronize on a regular basis. She saw me, smiled broadly (a REAL smile—I have no doubt that she really was happy to see me), and came over and said "How are you, Robyn? It's so good to see you." I responded in kind, and then realized that she was wearing a yellow sticker (playing for the other team). We got into a conversation and I asked her why she was against same-sex marriage. She said "I'm not. I had lots of customers who are lesbians. They're my friends. I like you all. You're nice people. I think you deserve rights. I came here with my church. You know, I'm a religious person." I felt like I was talking through a screen and nothing was sticking, as though she really DIDN'T understand the implications of what she was doing.


The most wonderful moments: making eye contact with friends, with strangers, sharing food and beverages, smiling, supporting each other. We were all so PRESENT and we were being so kind and loving toward each other. Several times I was moved to tears. This family of GLBT people and our allies is one that I am very, very proud to be a part of.

I hope that everyone reading this—

including those who are not personally interested in marrying or who already have marriage rights—will take action over the next few weeks to support those who are.

Here are a few ways you can help:

- ✓ Give money to the Freedom to Marry Coalition (ftmc.org), to GLAD (glad.org), to Equal Marriage (equalmarriage.org), to NGLTF (nglftf.org), to HRC (hrc.org). Also go on these web sites, educate yourself, and learn what you can do.
- ✓ Write to your local media.
- ✓ Call or email your representatives: Shrub Bush and his sidekick Dick "no loyalty to his lesbian daughter" Cheney, your Senators, Congressperson.
- ✓ If you live in Massachusetts write to your state senator and state rep. (Visit www.state.ma.us/legis/citytown.htm), and to that sanctimonious creep Romney telling him that you will be enraged if he dares to try to prevent same-sex marriage licenses from being granted on May 17.
- ✓ If you live in Boston write to Mayor Menino and thank him for coming out in support of same-sex marriage.
- ✓ Send those who support GLBT civil rights by sending them a campaign contribution (even if it's small and mostly symbolic).
- ✓ Ask your friends, neighbors, relatives and co-workers to do all of the above.

Please, even if you don't consider yourself an activist, do something! 

A Letter to the Community


Dear friends and colleagues,

As some of you know, my mother is terminally ill. My partner Donna and I have been taking care of her at our house since September. As my mom's health declines and she's gotten to the point of requiring around-the-clock care, Donna (who has been a State employee for over 10 years) applied for Family Medical Leave under the State FML policy that allows employees to use sick time to care for a "relative living in the employee's immediate household who is seriously ill." Last week her leave request was officially denied: a domestic partner's parent does not qualify as a relative.

March 11th the State of Massachusetts will reconvene a constitutional convention in another attempt to ensure that Donna and I will never be recognized as a family in the eyes of the state. [The Con Con did approve an amendment on March 11 that may become a ballot question. Another vote was happening after press time.]

I know that you personally do not support such an amendment. However, I want to ask you to go one step further: please contact your legislators and let them know your opinion. It will only take a few minutes of your time, and in today's divided society, each call makes a huge difference.

Visit www.massequality.org to find out who your reps are and how they voted at the last convention. Then call the number given and ask to speak to the senator or representative. Most likely you will be offered the opportunity to speak to an assistant instead. Tell them your name and address, that you are a constituent, and that you urge them to vote NO on any amendment. Please call even if your reps voted "the right way" last time, to thank them and make sure they don't get scared off from staying the course.

Then ask your friends to do the same. Thank you for your help. 

Gail Zacharias

BiZone's Endless Possibilities Conference

Once again, New Jersey is the place to be for the Endless Possibilities Conference on Saturday, April 24. The one-day conference will be held at the Woodbridge Hilton. There is a Friday night party "Fun and Flirtation" hosted by Tina. And on Saturday the conference will be a "relax-a-con" format. Rather than a multi-track conference, it's a one-day event with 'pick up' panels. The organizers decided that this year's conference would focus on having fun and meeting people, and less of an emphasis on big-name speakers. They are planning 5 excellent panels, and they are looking for speakers and opinionated folks. Contact fellicce@hotmail.com if you are interested.

Saturday night there will be drag performances by Diva Review and a DJ dance party. Register online at www.bizone.org/con2004/register.html by April 10 for a discount, after that onsite registration is \$44.

BiWomen Back Issues

Do you have back issues of *BiWomen*? We have a full set of *BiWomen* newsletters (from 1983 to the present) with the exception of two missing issues: August/September 1988, and June/July 1990. Do you have either or both of these somewhere in your personal archives? Please do check as it would be great to have a complete set on file, as we continue to make bisexual/feminist/women's/glbtiq history! Contact Robyn Ochs at ochs@bi.org.

Sent: Tuesday, February 17, 2004 10:26 AM
Subject: We got MARRIED!

Hey there -

In case you hadn't heard already, Emily and I were among those on Friday who got legally married in San Francisco. It was so cool! We were even the "designated girl couple" in the newspaper.

We had about 10 friends who were able to come down to City Hall on short notice to be there for the ceremony. Supervisor Jake McGoldrick, who is a friend of ours, was kind enough to officiate. We got to have it in the Supervisors' Chambers, which made Emily especially happy. (She does lots of stuff at City Hall and aspires to be a Supervisor one day.) As it happens, the Spanish Minister of Justice, who is from the Basque country, was in the chambers when we arrived. He and his entourage wound up staying for the ceremony, and he wished us much happiness, etc.

One of the best parts for me was that in July, when we had our wedding at Stern Grove, we made the decision to leave politics out of it. Somehow, it seemed more radical to proceed as though it was any other wedding. And we just didn't want that negativity coming into the sacred space we were creating. On Friday, though, we got to express our civil disobedience in a concrete way, and in a way that was still all about the love.

Being two chicks in white dresses, we got photographed a LOT. We also got interviewed for KCBS radio, for both TV and radio from Spain, and I even did a short interview / statement for the top Spanish-language program in the U.S. (Yes, it was in Spanish, which is why it was so short.)

There was a short reception at City Hall that evening—apparently, Newsom had already planned a reception to celebrate his new mayorship, and just turned it into a wedding reception. And afterwards, four friends and we went to a Chevy's one block from City Hall. We saw many couples also celebrating their nuptials with chips and salsa.

No one knows how long this will last. In the mean time, though, we have a marriage license! It's got the seal of both San Francisco and California and everything. (Emily plans to call Blue Cross to get on my dental plan ASAP...) We're delighted that we got the chance to stand up and be counted on behalf of other same-sex couples who choose to marry. Woo hoo! ▽

Love, Lindasusan



San Francisco bi activist Lindasusan (at left) and her partner Emily on their wedding day.

Everybody's Talking About It.....by Lani Ka'ahumanu

This is part of an overheard same-sex marriage conversation of the retired Republican businessmen 65 to early 80s who meet at the bar / restaurant around 5 p.m. everyday where I work:

"What's the big deal? It has nothing to do with us."

"Can you imagine being with someone 50 years and not being able to get married? That's sad."

"I didn't know they couldn't get married. It won't hurt anything or anyone so why not?"

"It's none of our business and marriage is a civil right."

This is all I could hear as I waitressed. Granted this is northern California but these guys are WAY pro-Bush and his gang of thugs and are pro-war in Iraq etc. This grassroots celebratory civil disobedience [or rioting!] has a huge feel-good spin to it that will be difficult to quell.

And, yes, "infectious." It sounds as if the Terminator governor has blown this way out of proportion and perhaps will alienate those still making up their minds and bring more folks on board. ▽

How to Stop Being Invisible

By Sheeri Kritzler

All of the couples in the Goodridge, et. al. vs. the Department of Public Health case identify as gay or lesbian. They are, literally, gay and lesbian couples. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court referred to their marriages as same-sex marriage. By doing so, they included people who want a marriage they cannot currently obtain, regardless of their sexual orientation.

They included bisexuals who are in same-sex relationships, and they included genderqueer people who go beyond the binary model of biological sex.

This inclusivity is important. As a single bisexual woman, why the heck would I fight for "gay marriage"? A friend said to me, "I haven't yet encountered anyone who is advocating allowing people who identify as 'gay' to marry while also advocating denying marriage to people who identify as 'bi.' Is anyone actually calling for this situation? What's the point of getting upset about this?"

On the surface, he's correct—if "gay marriage" is instituted, then I'll be able to marry whomever I want. There is still the issue of bisexual invisibility to fight. By being more inclusive, we can fight many fights at once.

Civil rights came about as rights for black people first. Then Hispanic, Latino, Native American, Asian, Pacific Islander and other people of color had to fight for their rights. Indeed, the very term "people of color" is extremely inclusive, as well as beautifully describing the rainbow spectrum that is race.

In the same vein, the Bisexual Resource Center has launched the Inclusivity Project—a project where alternative, more inclusive and fair language and ideas are proposed to organizations and businesses who have less than stellar records in that area.

Bay Windows—notorious in the past for snubbing bisexuals as either being non-existent, in denial about really being gay, or everyone's favorite, trendy—has become more bi and trans friendly. Their editorial "Try Coming Out as Bisexual" was printed the week after the Bisexual Resource Center's 4th Annual House Party, at which the editor-in-chief was present.

We're also working with the HRC to get them to be more of a champion of bi and trans rights, as they claim in their tagline. We're making excellent progress.

The best part is, there are things that anyone can do, anywhere. Check out www.biresource.org/inclusivity.html for the

latest news and ways you can help. As well, you can e-mail inclusivity@biresource.org with suggestions of inclusive language on issues, or pointing out where any organization has failed to be inclusive, of sexuality, gender, race, class, or any other factor.

One day I know that I will be able to look at the Inclusivity Project as a short-lived interlude that marked the transition from a less tolerant society to a more loving and accepting one. ▽

Book Review: *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, Penguin Books, 2003

Reviewed by Annie Goglia

I highly recommend this novel! It has a cast of very strong women characters taking charge of their lives. The year is 1964 and the setting is South Carolina. The main character is a 14-year-old white girl, Lily, whose mother died when she was little. She lives with an abusive father and her nanny, Rosaleen, an African-American woman. The two of them run off together (I'm deliberately leaving out details so I don't spoil the story) and end up living with 3 African-American sisters who keep bees and have a honey business.

There are no overtly same-sex relationships, but one could speculate about the nature of the friendship between Rosaleen and one of the sisters. The friendships and support among women in this book is inspiring, as are the values of cooperation, standing up against injustice (especially racism and abuse of women and children).

"*The Secret Life of Bees*" portrays much pain, but is ultimately hopeful about the power of love, cooperation, and community to change not only personal lives but also the world for the better. ▽

Visit BBWN online at:
biresource.org/bbwn
for a calendar listing of
local bisexual events.

Volunteers Needed for Helpline

The GLBT Helpline and the Peer Listening Line of Fenway Community Health provide information, referral, and support to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender callers through its toll-free nationwide lines and they are seeking new volunteers. If you self identify as GLBT, have 5 hours per month to spare, and are looking for a way to help the community then email program coordinator Jim Maynard at jmaynard@fenwayhealth.org or call 617-927-6242. The Line is especially in need of women, bisexual, and transgender volunteers. A new volunteer training begins in February. Be the voice that answers our community's call!

BBWN Wants Your Used Books, CDs, VHS tapes, and DVDs!

Long-time member Gail Zacharias is helping BBWN with fundraising by listing used books, etc. on various online channels. 40% of the sale price will be donated to BBWN. If you have books to donate, please bring them to the BRC office, or contact Robyn (ochs@bi.org, 617-413-2717) to arrange for book transfer. The books must be in reasonably good shape—in particular, all pages must be present and readable (some highlighting and underlining is ok if it doesn't obscure the text), and the cover must be present and firmly attached to the pages (it's ok for the dust jacket of a hardcover to be missing). And the books mustn't be smelly (e.g. musty or smoky), since Gail will be storing them in her home!

THANKS THIS MONTH TO THE GENEROUS BOOK GIVERS BELOW:

Randi Ellingboe &
Christina Micek;
Sandy Hall & Peggy
Gill; Robyn Ochs;
Ellyn Ruthstrom

Bi-ding My Time

Dear Editor,


As a bisexual woman watching the legislative debates this week, I am reminded of the joy I have felt kissing a (male) loved one in a restaurant, but also the embarrassment I have felt when shouted at by a stranger on the subway for holding a (female) loved one's hand. I recall getting a waiter's attention when he was certain that the wine order would come from my boyfriend, and the amusement I felt when servers checked out my girlfriend and me, wondering if these two women on Valentine's Day were a couple.

For me, the differences between dating men and women are as clear as the pink and blue sections of a toy store. When I am in a mixed sex couple, our unity is acceptable but I bear the constant challenge of speaking up, showing that we reject traditional roles of male/female couples. When I am in a same-sex couple, the relationship is suspect, but I have equal say in it. No one makes assumptions about my role.

Bisexuals are troubling to both sides of the gay marriage issue because of the widespread belief that sexual orientation is biological. After all, why would we choose "inferior" relationships when we could just as happily marry into "acceptable" ones? Why would some of us decide to appear gay when we could decide to

appear straight? (It's very hard to appear bi, so we're stuck with misperceptions most of the time.) Although bisexuals have been mentioned in some of the legislative debates, our troubling presence is largely ignored. Our defenders can't quite say, "That's how God made them," because what does that mean? For me, it means that I value personality over physical sexual characteristics. And that's more than a lot of folks are willing to accept.

I have chosen to commit my life to a woman. After our commitment ceremony, a friend asked, "How can you still call yourself bisexual if you're married?" If I liked red hair and blond hair, would I suddenly dislike blondes if I married a redhead?

I could have happily married a man, and could now have the luxury of ignoring the furor over gay marriage, safe in my rights and benefits as a married spouse. But when I was ready to marry, I found myself in love with a woman, and I still am. Being bisexual means I didn't choose to commit to a woman; I chose to commit to my partner. This Valentine's Day, I honor this relationship, regardless of sex. And I hope that soon the Commonwealth will do the same. Meanwhile, I'm "bi"-ding my time. 

Dawn Dreisbach


The L Word from page 4

potentially because she hasn't herself identified as such as of episode #8) is Jenny. This character is roundly hated by most of the lesbians I know because she is all over the place with her needs, desires, and her emaciated Gothish look. She's supposed to be this tortured writer who feels things so deeply and needs the sensual experiences to write about. blah blah blah. OK, I don't particularly like Jenny either, but I do sympathize with her dilemma, which is being in love with a man and feeling an incredible attraction to a woman and acting upon it.

And I think this is where a bi view and lesbian view may differ. Most of the comments I heard about Jenny from lesbians is that they want her to decide what she wants: Tim or Marina, men or women. From bis I heard much more that they want Jenny to be honest with the people she's involved with and truthful to herself. Too many of us have known what it feels like to be caught up between our feelings for men and for women, sometimes at the same time, and unsure of what those feelings mean about ourselves—whether for just that moment

in time or for understanding what shape our sexuality will take for our lifetime. I think a lesbian viewer tends to see any woman who is experiencing same-sex attraction as a woman who is heading to becoming a lesbian. A bi viewer understands there are more options.

I hope that the characters of Alice and Jenny do expand as ways of exploring bi identity on the show, and aren't just used as ways to keep the straight audience tied in with opportunities for straight sex scenes. And I hope that lesbian viewers don't get bent out of shape if bi experience is dealt with more. I hope the positive image of lesbian and bi women sharing their lives prevails because I think, for the most part, we coexist and add to The Flow Chart in wonderful ways—together.

Time for my end of essay rant: So this is supposed to be a cutting edge queer show, letting us see into lesbian and bi women's lives? And the first time we see a dildo is when a man (who self-identifies as a lesbian) brings one out? Come on, *L Word*, bring on the dildos and the butches! 

CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

April 27 ♦ Tuesday

BBWN Pride and Brainstorming Meeting, 6:30 p.m. Meet at the Bisexual Resource Center for pizza and salad and some brainstorming for the Pre-Pride brunch and beyond. The center is located at 29 Stanhope Street, The Boston Living Center, 4th floor. Let Ellyn know (nellythrustmor@aol.com) you'll be coming so she can get enough food for folks.

April 30 & May 1 ♦ Friday & Saturday

WAM! Women And the Media Symposium: Taking Our Place in the Public Conversation. Registration for WAM! is \$95 and includes entrance to all keynotes, workshops, and panels, as well as a Friday evening reception with Katha Pollitt, continental breakfast on Saturday, a box lunch, and Saturday evening wine and cheese closing reception (with cash bar). Students and seniors with ID may pay the reduced fee of \$45. Scholarships for those with limited income are also available. To request a scholarship, contact Jaclyn at 617-876-5310. Visit www.centerfornewwords.org/wam.html for details!

May 4 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Bi inspirations: people who inspired you to explore your sexual identity: writers, actors, activists, organizers, songwriters, etc. Bring a short piece from your favorite author (or your own work) to read aloud." See April 6th.

May 5 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See April 7th.

May 11 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. See April 10th.

May 12 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. All bi community members welcome. See April 14th.

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-8:45 p.m. at the Diesel Cafe. See April 14th.

May 15 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Why argue with success? Johnny D's on Holland Street in Davis Square in Somerville always draws the biggest bi brunch crowd. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

May 16 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Brunch at Robyn's in Jamaica Plain, noon. Please bring the usual potluck dish and drinks to share. It's also Lilac Sunday and those interested can head over to the Arnold Arboretum after the brunch for a stroll together. Contact Robyn at ochs@fas.harvard.edu or 617-413-2717 for directions and to let her know you are coming.

May 18 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. The topic is: "Lesbian-Bisexual dialogue. All women

always welcome, but tonight women from Lesbian Rap especially invited to attend!" See April 4th.

May 20 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See April 7th.

May 21 ♦ Friday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Bi Politics: Local, National, International." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA, 02140 or e-mail to nellythrustmor@aol.com.

May 22 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Bike Ride, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Celebrate Spring with a bike ride. It's a good time of year for the Upper Charles trail, which is beginner to intermediate and mostly flat or gentle grades; or to Walden Pond through Weston and Lincoln to Concord, with lunch or snack either at Walden or the DeCordova Museum. This one's not for beginners—lots of hills (but what goes up comes thrillingly down.) RSVP to Arthur with your phone number and we'll work out the details: arthurc@biresource.org.

May 23 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1:00 p.m. Veggie Planet is popular and centrally located, so we're doing it again. Veggie Planet is located at 47 Palmer Street (at Club Passim) in Harvard Square, Cambridge. As the name suggests, it's vegetarian food. T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

May 25 ♦ Tuesday

BiWomen mailing, 7 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Help BBWN get the newsletter out to women around the country. Socialize during and after, when we'll head to Central Square for a cuppa.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Saturdays: Dancing at Hollywood KTV, 41 Essex Street, Chinatown T, Boston. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. \$10 cover.

Sundays: Queer night, 9 p.m.-1 a.m., the Milky Way, 403 Centre St, Jamaica Plain. DJ and dance floor.

Thursdays: Dyke Night at the Midway Cafe, 3496 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain. LAST MONTH, ending on April 29th.



SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for *BiWomen*
(sliding scale)

- ___ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)
- ___ \$20-\$30 (suggested)
- ___ \$30-\$100 Extra Special Donor
- ___ Renewal
- ___ New Subscriber

***BiWomen* wants you!!!**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

BBWN, P.O. BOX 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Tuesdays:

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: 617-354-8807.

First Wednesdays, Third Thursdays:

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

CALENDAR

April 6 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. A discussion group for bisexual, bi-friendly, and questioning women. Topic: "Maintaining bisexuality in a monosexual context." Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

April 7 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

April 10 & 11 ♦ Saturday & Sunday

Bisexual Resource Center's Annual Report Mailing, 1-7 p.m. at the Wainwright Bank conference room in Davis Square. During Easter weekend the Bisexual Resource Center will be doing its mailing of the 2003 Annual Report. Be the first to have your hot little hands on the annual report! We need your help; it will take 40 person-hours to complete this mailing! We feed you lunch and dinner if you're around at the right times. Mailings are a great way to meet other people who are bi and bi-supportive, as well as lend a helping hand.

April 13 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. A support group for bi and lesbian women who are married or in long-term relationships. Contact Denise at dpp1029@rcn.com for information. Call 617-354-8807 for directions.

April 14 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. All bi community members are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meeting is at the Living Center at 29 Stanhope Street in Back Bay.

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-8:45 p.m. at the Diesel Cafe, 257 Elm Street in Somerville. T stop is Davis on the Red Line. The

group meets to discuss issues relevant to women in the poly community, especially those of interest to queer women. We range from social chatting to more in-depth discussions, depending on what people want to talk about. If you haven't attended before, please email Donna at dalbino83@yahoo.com to arrange a way to recognize the group.

April 15 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See February 4th.

April 17 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. This month we'll be brunching at the Garden of Eden, an excellent place in the South End. The address is 571 Tremont St. Nearest T stop is Back Bay on the Orange Line.

April 18 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Brunch at Johnny D's in Somerville, 11:30 a.m. We're going to gather this month at a spot that has been a favorite in the bi community for years. If you can, drop Elyn an email to let her know you plan on coming. (nellythrustmor@aol.com)

April 20 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Polyamory: having multiple relationships with the knowledge and consent of your partners." See April 6th.

April 21 ♦ Wednesday

Day of Silence. GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) is sponsoring their 9th annual Day of Silence to raise awareness about discrimination against LGBT students in schools. Organizers anticipate over 200,000 students will be participating in the action this year.

April 25 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. We're trying a new Sunday brunch place, too. Debbie Shore welcomes Biversity to her restaurant, Prose, at 352 Mass. Ave in Arlington. Take the 77 bus from Harvard Square. The phone number at Prose is 781-648-2800.

Judy Glick, M.Ed., LMHC
licensed psychotherapist for lesbians,
gays, and bisexuals

- Enhancing self-esteem
- Recovery from incest/abuse
- Coming out
- Relationship and family issues
- Depression and anxiety
- Transitions and career change

781-646-2282
Couples & Individuals
Sliding Scale/Insurance
Near Arlington T

April 25 ♦ Sunday

March for Women's Lives, Washington, D.C. Join hundreds of thousands of people who believe that women have the right to choose if, when, and how to have children. In this election year, it's an important time to stand together and voice a pro-woman, pro-sex, and pro-choice perspective.



CALENDAR continues on page 11

Bi Politics: Local, National, International



Photo by Ellyn Ruthstrom

Reasons to Take to the Streets

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

There have been lots of reasons to take to the streets lately. With our government of greed handing out tax breaks to the wealthy and taking away as many personal rights as possible, not to mention starting two wars in the last three years, it's amazing to me that we haven't called a national strike yet. I work with teenagers in my day job and when I told them I had been in DC with a million other people for the March for Women's Lives in April one of them looked at me and said quite simply, "Why didn't

Reasons continues on page 8

Building a Relationship with a State Representative: You Can Do It, Too!

By Debbie Block-Schwenk

A few years ago the *Boston Phoenix* ran an article about how removed the author felt from the political process. He expressed a frustration with the system and a sense that the government was unapproachable and unresponsive. I'm sure we've all had similar feelings in the past. Maybe the dislocation some people feel starts in school. Civics courses, if they're even taught, are full of the big picture—separation of powers and famous Supreme Court cases, far removed from people's lives. Where do you learn the useful stuff? How does a bill really get passed? How does one citizen make her voice heard?

But I found his lack of initiative equally frustrating — our state and federal representatives are only a letter or a phone call away — and they do listen. In the past several years I have met with my U.S. Representative about peace in the Middle East; helped on State Senator Jarrett Barrios' campaign; and written, called, and spoken to my state representative about same-sex marriage and environmental issues. That's in addition to various phone calls and meetings with staff members on similar issues. I still feel intimidated sometimes, especially calling my federal legislators' offices, but then I remember — they work for me. No matter how much money they have to raise, or how many media pundits they have to flatter, at the end of day (or the term), it is the people's votes that put them into office.*

I hope that many of you who read this in Massachusetts wrote or emailed your state legislators about same-sex marriage during the recent Constitutional Convention period. Some may even have written you back. I was initially annoyed at my state rep, Kevin Honan, when I didn't get a reply, but gratified when I called again and his aide told me, "We got your letter. You're on the list."

Representative Honan heard from me a couple more times during that grueling multi-session process. And he voted against the amendment that would replace same-sex marriage with civil unions.

A couple of weeks later, I met with him and his legislative aide as part of an effort by the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow, an environmental coalition working on getting toxic chemicals out of the environment. My husband had been working to get other

Building continues on page 7

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Volunteers of the Month

Gail Zacharias

Robyn Ochs

Deb Morley

Wayne Bryant

Katrina

Debbie Block-
Schwenk

Marshall Miller

Dorian Solot

Mary Heath

And many more
fabulous people!
You know who
you are!

BiWomen is published bi-
monthly.

Editor:

Ellyn Ruthstrom

**Printed on
recycled paper**

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

I consider the work of putting together the newsletter part of my own activism in the community. Not only is some of the writing in here political, but the fact that we are keeping a marginalized community connected and aware is politics at its most immediate. I like to think that people get something positive out of each issue they read. Do you? I'd love to hear from you about what *BiWomen* means to you, or if you have any suggestions. Drop me an email at nellythrustmor@aol.com.

Besides sitting at a computer pushing out a newsletter every other month, I also tend to get out and demonstrate when given the opportunity (see page 1 for "Reasons to Take to the Streets"). So while editing can be very solitary, marching and chanting is all about connecting with others of like minds. In April, I marched in DC with a million people, but what made it very special for me was to be sharing that historic moment with my girlfriend, Claire. While I normally have to sequester myself away to get the newsletter done, this was a great opportunity to be political and together at the same time. Thanks, Claire, for walking with me and for being supportive when I need to do those solitary things.

Ellyn Ruthstrom



Next in *BiWomen*

The *BiWomen* theme for
August/September is:

Carrying a Tune: Music in Your Life

What shape does music take in your life? What do you listen to? Has it changed over time? What does music bring into your life? Who are the bi musical artists out there who you relate to?

Deadline: July 16, 2004

Future Issues

October/November

The Fiction Issue

Send your suggestions for future topics to
nellythrustmor@aol.com

Please Submit to *BiWomen*!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,
black-and-white art, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to

NellyThrustmor@aol.com

**If you do not want your name
published, please tell us.**

All articles and art appearing in
this newsletter are copyrighted
by the authors and artists.

Why are these women smiling?

One reason is that they have just had a delicious brunch at Robyn's lovely JP home. Lots of food, lots of talking to old friends and meeting new ones, and a sense of celebration for Robyn & Peg, and Megan & Carla who will be getting married the following day.

BBWN wishes all the same-sex couples marrying in Massachusetts tremendous happiness in their legally sanctioned households!! And to those couples who love without licenses...carry on!



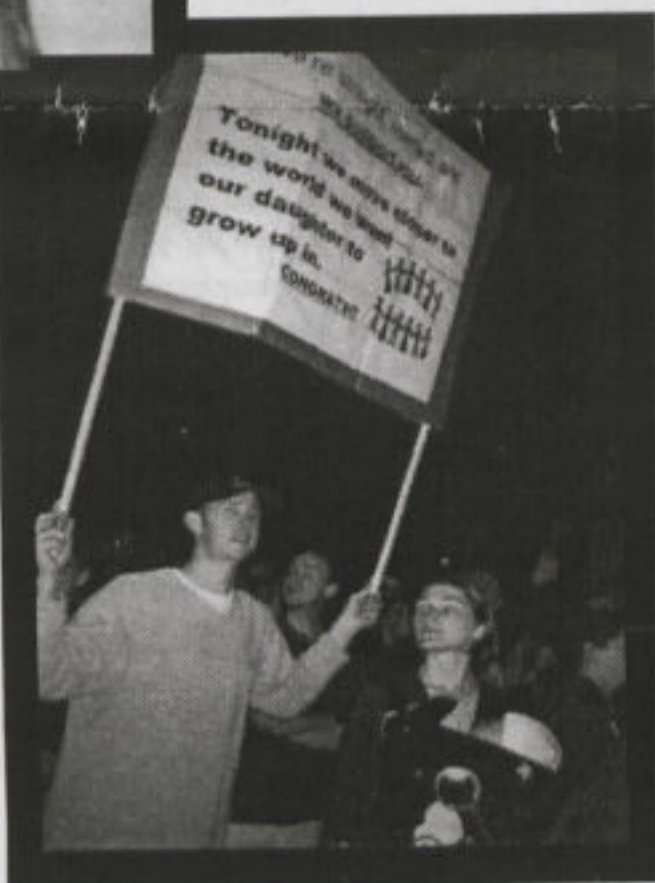
Brunch Coordinator Wants You to Host!

BBWN potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area. We try to hold a brunch in a member's home each month so that people can relax and share food and experiences in a safe space. Deb Morley is the brunch coordinator, so please contact her at debmo345@comcast.net if you are interested in hosting a brunch. Thanks Deb for volunteering! There are no member brunches scheduled for June and July, but don't miss BBWN's Pre-Pride brunch on Saturday, June 12. See the calendar on pages 11-12 for more details.



Midnight,
May 17th, 2004,
Cambridge,
Massachusetts

Thousands of people gathered on the front lawn of Cambridge's City Hall on the night of May 16th, and as midnight hit, the crowd went wild. The rice was thrown, the bubbles were blown, and the marriage licenses began to be filled out. Massachusetts became the first state to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. There were many straight allies in the crowd, including this couple who proclaimed on their sign: "Tonight we move closer to the world we want our daughter to grow up in." Amen.



Photos by Ellyn Ruthstrom

International Bi Conference Ready to Book Rooms

The Eight International Conference on Bisexuality will be held August 5-8, 2004 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The conference organizers have announced that the Holiday Inn Metrodome has been chosen as the official conference hotel in the heart of the Five Corners and West Bank of Minneapolis. Special conference hotel rates will be \$98 a night through July 1st, 2004, and is available by contacting the Holiday Inn Metrodome at 612-333-4646 or visiting www.metrodome.com and using conference code ICB. The conference planning committee also announced the securing of dormitory rooms on Campus for interested attendees. Rates will be \$32 to \$37 a day for accommodations in one of three on-campus dorms. Dorm information and registration is available online at www.8ICB.org. For more information or to register, visit www.8icb.org, or call 612-825-4400

My Favorite Martian

By Mary Heath

Sometimes my days involve teaching the law relating to a criminal offence or defense in the morning, teaching a legal theory class about whether the category of sex should be abolished in the afternoon, and going to a meeting about queer liberation in the evening. Some of my students think I'm straight because they have encountered a former partner in activist or social environments. Some think I'm a lesbian because they've seen me with my current partner, or in contexts, which suggest to them that I am a lesbian, or because I talk in classes about how the law constructs families so as to exclude same-sex partnerships.

Bifurcation

Bifurcation: division into two forks or branches; the point of such division; each or both of such forks or branches.

Bisexuality is a metaphor for my life on a broader scale. Internally, it all looks fine. I don't struggle too much to put the pieces together. But externally, people constantly mistake the part for the whole. It isn't a straightforward process for me to assess what they think they know about me, what they expect, or how they judge me. Complex decisions remain to be made about what to disclose, what to keep to myself, and the rest. Assumptions of either/or are culturally entrenched to the point that, even when faced with evidence to the contrary, people will choose to identify me as having 'become het' or as being a newly identifying lesbian. For me, choosing bisexuality as a label is about creating safety for myself. It's about engaging in community by describing myself to others in such a way that they can understand my conduct and don't assume things that aren't true of me and subsequently feel misled or betrayed.

Many non bisexual people think of bisexuality as a bifurcated identity, or a split experience of the self. A bisexual is conceptualized as a person who is sometimes gay or lesbian, and sometimes straight, by turns. Her sense of herself is imagined to be split, into the two pieces signified by "bi." Sometimes she plays for one team, and sometimes on the other. Sometimes she's on the right side, sometimes she's a traitor. This fact alone makes it clear that she is not to be trusted. In popular culture, women who engage in sex with people of both sexes are claimed by lesbians as a lesbian if they are well behaved. If they are

badly behaved, they are identified as the evil bisexual woman. Definitely not a lesbian.

However, the life writings of bisexual people do not reflect this picture of bisexuality as an unavoidably bifurcated identity. Bisexual people often experience the decision to adopt bisexual identity as naming the entirety of their experience as a unified whole. Many of us experience choosing bisexual identity as a homecoming. It allows us to name feelings, experiences, and self understandings as part of a whole, rather than demanding that we attempt to understand ourselves or explain ourselves to others as sometimes one thing and sometimes another. In a sense, it is a choice in the direction of unification, exactly the opposite of being split.

Of course, choosing bisexual identity is not the end of every struggle, but merely a new stage in working out an ethics and politics of self and of community. Perhaps this process has particular pertinence for bisexual women, who engage this identity in the context of discourses which inscribe us as traitorous, unethical, and indiscriminate.

In a sense, my bisexuality could be understood as a metaphor for the rest of my life. It seems clear that many people, including students in my classes, co-workers and co-activists find my combination of direct action activism and an academic job in a law school an exceedingly strange and contradictory business. It strikes them as a bifurcated life in which I spend part of my time upholding and legitimizing the law, and part of my life advocating or participating in law breaking. However, I don't find the coming together of these different aspects of my life particularly contradictory. I experience them as distinct, but related components of the life I'm having. I don't think of myself as one person at work and someone completely different when I'm facilitating a meeting of the autonomous web of liberation at S11 (anti-globalization protest in Melbourne, Australia), running nonviolent direct action training for reclaim the streets, or singing in the Trade Union choir at a community picket.

Continuity

Professors should be more than propagators of the status quo; maintenance of the status quo cannot be a valid goal of feminist scholarship or of any other scholarship that searches for understanding.¹

In part, these diverse aspects of my life are

capable of being woven together because I understand each component part somewhat differently than some of the onlookers. I no more think of myself as a lesbian some days and a heterosexual on others, than I think of myself as a lawbreaker on some days and a staunch maintainer of the status quo on others. I don't really think of my job teaching law as requiring me to uphold or legitimize the law.

Rather, I think of it as requiring me to explain the law and the legal system, and to train students in how that system functions.

Perhaps doing that unavoidably legitimizes the legal system to some extent: clearly, many of the students I teach will go on to be enthusiastic participants in white supremacist patriarchal capitalism. However, the way that I teach law also equips students to critique and analyze legal rules and institutions and their relationships to broader networks of power. I constantly invite students to look below the surface and consider the constructions of women, men, families and society which are constructed by and embedded in the law. I strive toward a pedagogy of empowerment which will put students in a position to acquire skills for building community: collective decision making, cooperation and a capacity for self-reflection and awareness of others with very different lives.

It is precisely these practices, and my articulation of a progressive politics which lead a fair proportion of students who come into contact with me to view me as some kind of Martian. Usually (as far as I can tell), they like me. I'm a nice Martian. But, they've never met anyone like me before, so I am a Martian.

Disclosure or not

There is no way to come out to someone as bisexual other than to say I am bisexual. Telling them that you have had sexual relationships with people of both sexes doesn't do it. For example, lesbians at choir have approached my partner to say how glad they are that I have returned to the fold after 7 years in the straight world. The assumption that the sex of my current partner says all there is to know is so

total it can only be displaced by an explicit statement. Unfortunately, this is far more difficult than simply communicating to someone that you have a partner of the same sex. Equally unfortunately, it's rare to get to be confident about what conclusions people have drawn for themselves. I have no idea who most of my students think I am in this respect, and very few of them are likely to ask. Sometimes

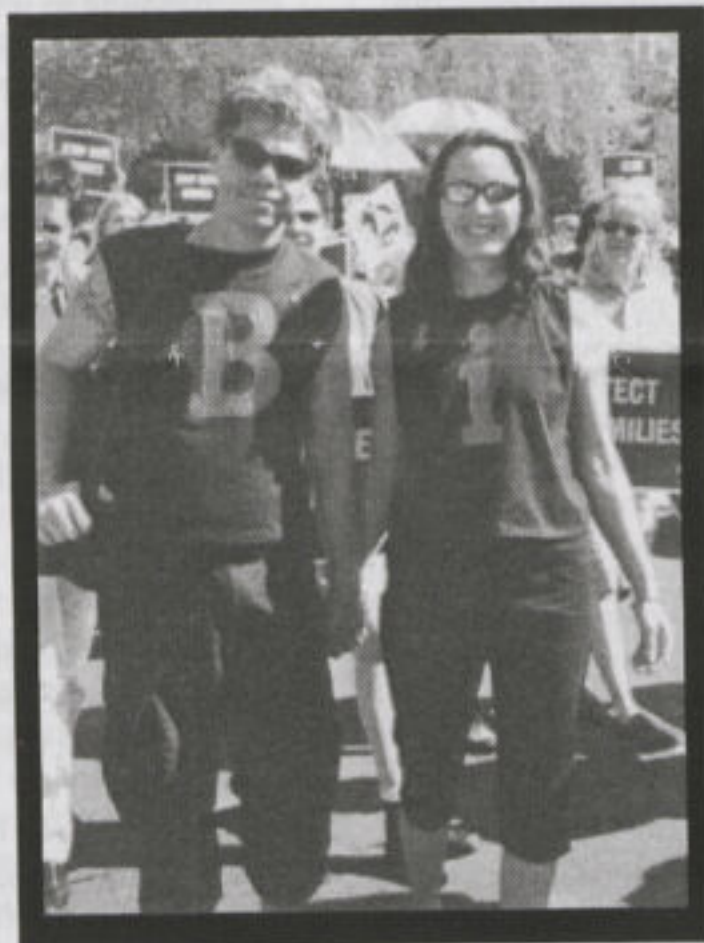
walking on the beach arm in arm with my partner I'd swear some people are trying to work out if we are two men, two women, or one of each. Others appear to be thinking "Did I just see two women kissing?" but probably none of them are thinking 'were they two lesbians, two bisexual women or one of each?'

When I began my job as a legal academic, I had not long given up lesbian identity and ceased to be a publicly visible lesbian activist. Dykes studying law came through my door one

by one and came out to me. What to do? I was now in a relationship with a man, and it seemed clear many of them assumed me to be a lesbian. Mostly, if they had stopped by for a conversation, I would make clear that I had lived as a lesbian, but that I was now in a relationship with a man, in an attempt to have an honest exchange. Occasionally, where the issue of sexuality was not central, I would leave whatever assumptions the student might be making undisturbed. However, when heterosexuals assume that I am a lesbian, I usually leave them to it, unless we have an ongoing relationship. Often, it's hard for me to tell with complete confidence what people think I am (other than Martian).

When I was in a relationship with a man I was acutely conscious that we had the privilege of touching each other in public being ordinary, or almost invisible unless a lesbian happened to be passing. I find, ironically, that I am much more likely to choose to touch my lesbian partner in public than I was to touch him. And, as there are hundreds of law students I have taught, on the streets of

Martian continues on next page



LGBTQ/Q Youth Anthology

Co-editors are creating a unique, multifaceted anthology of works by and for LGBTQ/Queer youth and allies. Pieces should address topics that are relevant to LGBTQ/Q youth, including (but not limited to): Race/Ethnicity, Gender, School/Education, Location, Media/Popular Culture, Family, Community, Dating, Religion. The book will be a collection of writing that deals with serious issues, aimed at celebrating, empowering, and engaging LGBTQ/Q youth. Pieces (particularly non-fiction) should be politically/socially conscious and make connections between personal experiences and the larger social/political issues. Submissions should be no longer than 5,000 words. Final deadline is July 30, 2004. Contact jgamble@rci.rutgers.edu or Cheryl Clarke, Rutgers University, 3 Bartlett St, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

Journal Seeking Submissions

Breath & Shadow, the new journal of literature and disability culture, is seeking submissions. Since the inaugural issue in January the editors have received hundreds of submissions and subscriptions. The call for submissions is always open. The editors seek poetry, fiction, essays, drama, interviews, you-name-it. The writing does not have to be about disability; however, the journal only accepts work from writers with disabilities (defined very broadly and including mental, physical, emotional, cognitive, and sensory disabilities). Also seeking editorial assistants. If you are interested in reading submissions, offering opinions, and possibly working with the writers, this is a great opportunity for budding writers or editors who want to learn from an experienced, respected, and widely-published writer/editor/teacher. Please check out the website at www.abilitymaine.org/breath. The submission guidelines are at www.abilitymaine.org/breath/write.html. For more info, e-mail breathandshadow@aol.com.

Martian from page 5

Adelaide, they come across us in cafés, on the streets, walking on the beach, at the movies, pretty much everywhere. They also come across me singing queer positive songs at public meetings, demos, and pickets. Occasionally I look down into the audiences and find three or four law students beaming up at me from the front row.

For me safety comes through being out: being out as an activist in academia, being out as bisexual. It is about giving up defended, partial stories about myself in an attempt to retain something I fear to lose, and taking up forms of self-description which announce that I float as freely as I can figure out how to do, rather than attempting to nail myself to some kind of imagined community which wouldn't necessarily want me if it knew more about me.

Conflict

People think my activism and my teaching are in conflict, but my activism has provided me with the skills base that makes my teaching as good as it is, as participatory/interactive as it is, as distinctive as it is. I learnt them in meetings, at protests, and in support groups. I did not learn these skills in a university classroom. I learnt them with peace activists, anarchists, feminists and the rest of 'rent a crowd' [a derogatory expression for activists common in the Australian media]. I honed my analytical, strategic and communication skills far more in the community sector than in tertiary education. Having facilitated meetings of hundreds of people from all over Australia and from divergent political positions in meetings at public protests and sung to large numbers of people at concerts and public events, I come to lecturing to 210 with a very different sense of myself than some of my co-workers.

Inhabiting different spaces also means I know things I could not know if I only ever had relationships with people of one sex. In relationships with women, I have come to an understanding of my own power and of what is possible for women to do, and do together, to be and to be together that would not have been possible for me if I had never moved beyond heterosexual. But I have also discovered in relationships with men that the traces of my training to be a cardboard cut out woman remained in place, some of them never having been challenged in relationships with women. Some things are harder in relationships with men, given their training to be cardboard cut outs. But some are easier: and

that ease comes in part from heterosexual privilege, or the temporary and partial absence of heterosexism.

Being an activist and musician and academic allows me a different view of each of those roles, a view which enables me to do each of them differently than I could if I only did one of them. It enables me to more readily retain a progressive, compassionate, and human approach to my teaching in the current environment in tertiary education, which I experience as a constant pressure toward conservatism, disconnection, and inhumanity. Resisting the pressure toward erasing, ignoring, or slicing off any of the critical aspects of my life enriches the whole of my life. Certainly, it also means it requires more complex levels of navigation and negotiation, but I can't imagine choosing some version of the simple life just for the sake of simplicity. I've never been convinced that simplicity is more interesting or worthy than complexity.

Weaving

A culture of domination is anti-love. It requires violence to sustain itself. To choose love is to go against the prevailing values of the culture.²

My life is not only bifurcation, but also weaving: the bringing together of different strands into something which has an overall shape, even if it is a changing shape, a malleable shape, something not readily susceptible to being identified as a simple whole.

It's about reaching for full humanity and refusing limitations that I don't believe are legitimate or necessary, and about working toward integrity through ethical engagement with community. I refuse to excise parts of my life that I find meaningful or essential, even if I can't work out how to timetable them all as well as I'd like. ▼

¹ Olsen, F. (1989) "Feminist Theory in Grand Style," *Columbia Law Review* 89: 1147, 1178.

² hooks, b. (1994). *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*. New York: Routledge, 246.

Mary Heath teaches criminal law and legal theory at a University in Adelaide, South Australia. When not teaching law she trains groups in meeting facilitation, inclusive group process and nonviolent direct action. Her current activist commitments focus on ending rape and eliminating violence and abuse of GLBTIQ people.

Building from page 1

constituents to write or call Honan's office, and our diligence paid off: after the fourth request for a meeting we heard back and got to meet our representative face-to-face. At the meeting, Rep. Honan agreed to work to get a couple of bills out of committee. He was pleased to see me and asked for my input regarding the legislation the Alliance has introduced.

On the way out, I thanked Rep. Honan for his votes at the Constitutional Convention. He replied that the letters he had gotten in favor of same-sex marriage were a real help to him in his decision. (He was contacted by roughly 2000 people in his district on that issue, and those who contacted him ran 2-to-1 in favor of same-sex marriage.) He thanked me for my contacting him on this issue, and said that the volume of constituent contact made it easier to say "sorry" when lobbied by Catholic priests (he's Catholic) and Hasidic rabbis whom he had known for years.

When I called again about co-sponsoring one of the environmental bills, his aide recognized my name and greeted me courteously. Rep. Honan did co-sponsor the bill, and continues to be responsive on the issue.

So when we got an invitation to his annual fundraiser, we decided to go. It seems only fair after he's done a lot for us on several widely varying issues. The fundraiser is in a few weeks, and I'm curious to go and meet his other supporters.

State politics can seem tedious and unimportant, but we've seen with same-sex marriage how that is not the case. State representatives received thousands of messages about same-sex marriage, but in most cases they receive far fewer—it's rare that they hear from more than ten people about any issue. It's easy to make yourself heard, and you can even arrange a meeting, especially if you ask to meet on behalf of an organization, and can bring other constituents with you.

Our federal officials are also available, especially the U.S. reps. Again, it may take time to set up a meeting, and it may be with a staff person rather than the representative, but that's OK: the staff does the real work and a sympathetic staff person is extremely helpful. Some representatives hold community meetings where are all welcome, and their perspective on issues can bring to life the process that news stories make bland and impersonal.

So the next time you're frustrated at the decisions coming out of the State House, pick up the phone or your pen. To find out who your representatives are, go to

www.wheredolvoteinma.com. Enter your information, and it will tell you the names of all of your state and federal representatives, and will have links to their websites with contact information, including phone, address, and email. Remember — they work for us. ▽

*Our current president is a notable and unfortunate exception. Let's work to make sure that doesn't happen again.

BiCamp: It's Nature and Nurture

BiCamp 2003 was a huge success and we're all looking forward to the 11th annual BiCamp. Camp begins on Thursday afternoon, July 29th and runs through Monday morning on August 2nd. The location is near Northampton, Massachusetts (AKA Lesbianville, USA). Campers must provide their own tent, food, and transportation (sharing is encouraged). BiCamp includes showers and flush toilets. And we have the space all to ourselves! Basically, what you get is a place to pitch your tent, a fire pit, fresh water, beautiful wilderness, and the company of a few dozen bisexual and bi-friendly people for a fun summer weekend. Clothing-optional swimming is just a short walk through the woods.

Payment will be on a sliding scale of \$15 to \$45, depending on how long you're staying and what you can afford. Biversity asks campers to contribute according to their ability. The sliding scale is designed to allow those with minimal resources to attend, while still providing enough money for overhead, such as mailings, trash bags, wood for the communal evening fire, etc. The low end of the scale covers basic costs. The high end helps fund other bi events.

This year, for the first time, people will be able to register for camp online using PayPal (starting about June 10th). Find BiCamp info at www.biversity.org/bicamp.html. ▽

LGBTI Health Summit 2004

The 2nd Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Health Summit will be held August 25-29, 2004, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. If you care about LGBTI health and wellness, join fellow activists, researchers, community members, health care professionals, and allies at the summit. Following the pattern of past summits, Wednesday's Pre-Summit Institutes will allow for a full day of focused discussion and skill-building. Thursday through mid-day Sunday will be a varied program of workshops, plenaries, community events, and recreational activities. The hotel is centrally located on the Charles River and close to public transportation. Check out the website's programming page at www.healthsummit2004.org/programming.htm. For questions not answered by the website, please contact tlewis@jsi.com.

Are you a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender Smoker?

Do you want to quit smoking?

UCSF

Researchers at the University of California, San Francisco are looking for LGBT smokers to take part in an Internet-based smoking treatment program.

For more information, visit our website at <http://iquit.medschool.ucsf.edu>

ICB8 Highlights

Check out the new website for the 8th International Bi Conference at www.8icb.org. Find information about the proposed workshop schedule, information about the main speakers for the weekend, and other special events. Key speakers at the conference will include: Margaret C Charmoli, Ph.D., a bisexual activist for over 25 years and co-host of "Bi Cities," a Twin Cities cable television program about bisexuality; Makoto Hibino, a transgendered bisexual activist, and author of *To Be and/or Not to Be Bisexual*; and Luigi Ferrer, a Latino, bilingual, bicultural, HIV positive bisexual who has served as Executive Director of the Body Positive Resource Center and the Bisexual Foundation.

Reasons from page 1

you storm the White House? You had a million people and you didn't storm the White House?" I had to take a moment and think about it: why didn't we?

Marching through the streets of DC with at least a million people was a thrilling experience, even to a jaded, tenured activist like myself. I've been to many national marches and a part of me wished that it was my first national march again (as it apparently was for so many) because I wanted to feel that fresh awe of the power of a common cause. Besides the simple fact of having a million people moving together in a relatively small space, the crowd itself was quite extraordinary. It was amazing to see how many young people were there, how many older people, how many men, and how many people of color. This was not a single issue protest; this was a movement of people who said "No" to the corrupt powers engulfing this nation.

One of my favorite moments was while marching along Pennsylvania Avenue I was surrounded by a group where the women were chanting, "My body, my choice," and the men in the group chanted back, "Her body, her choice." It was also wonderful to see many families marching together, sometimes with two or three generations represented. My older sister marched in her first national march—Go, Beth!

Speaker after speaker took to the stage and spoke to us about our power, our significance, our future—I can only hope that we will remind ourselves of those feelings of power in November when we demand a regime change when we vote.

Having faith that you can make change in

the world is the lifeblood of any activist. Why bother to write that letter to the editor, hand out leaflets on a street corner, march to the state house, or even vote if you don't believe you can effect change in the lives of those around you. Change isn't always swift and we are all part of an ebb and flow of political surges that are rarely linear in nature. It's frustrating and it's complicated, and when you witness true change it is awesome, in the true sense of the word.

I am writing this on Monday, May 17, a date that will forever be remembered within our queer communities. Last night I stood with thousands of people at Cambridge City Hall as same-sex marriage became legal in Massachusetts and eager couples got the paperwork necessary to be wed. Today, I cry as I watch the couples on television beaming their happiness at the fact that after 25, 18, 13, 49 (!) years together Massachusetts says their relationships are legally binding.

These marriages are the fruit of so much activism, starting years ago. If we claim the Stonewall Rebellion as a signature moment of our movement, it has taken us 35 years of coming out, speaking out, and working together to create the climate that has now ushered in the first same-sex marriages in this country. Vermont led the way with its groundbreaking civil unions in 2000 and now the Bay State—in spite of its Mormon Republican governor—has once again been a pioneer in progressive politics.

I am 100% in favor of the equal marriage rights Massachusetts has instituted. I will work towards educating the community so that if it comes to a state referendum on the issue that we will win the rights permanently. However, I also have an opinion that isn't very popular

around these parts. While I'm not in favor of doing anything to prevent out-of-staters from coming to Massachusetts and getting married, I believe that it is very important for these out-of-staters to also stay in their own communities and have weddings and commitment ceremonies there. I believe that the same-sex ceremonies that have occurred over the last 15-20 years in Massachusetts have done a great deal to



Defend Domestic Partner Benefits

By Marshall Miller and Dorian Solot

In light of same-sex marriage, some Massachusetts employers have announced they are eliminating their domestic partner benefits plans. They're making a big mistake, and the bi community can help change their minds.

The move to do away with health benefits for domestic partners may seem logical at first. Once two-bride and two-groom pairs can get a marriage license from any city clerk's office in the state, some employers are thinking, why should unmarried same-sex couples continue to be eligible for joint health insurance? After all, we tell employees with different-sex partner they have to get hitched if they want medical insurance for a partner.

Unfortunately, these employers are trying to fix one error by compounding it with another.

There are two different sets of rationale for why employers should offer domestic partner benefits. The first, standard business practice rationale goes like this: "All employees deserve equal pay for equal work. Benefits make up a significant part of several thousand dollars worth of each employee's compensation. In order to treat all employees fairly and equally,

unmarried employees who are part of families should be able to receive family health insurance just as married employees can."

Ninety-two percent of the 7,300 employers around the country who offer domestic partner benefits used this rationale when they implemented their policies. As a result, their domestic partner policies are "inclusive"—that is, both same-sex and different-sex couples are eligible to receive them. Since these employers already don't require couples to marry to be eligible for benefits, they're far less likely to change their policies now that same-sex marriage has come to town.

The second rationale why an employer should offer domestic partner benefits—the one used by the Massachusetts employers who are cutting benefits—is this: "Only married families should get health benefits. Gay employees can't get married. Let's offer them domestic partner benefits temporarily, until same-sex marriage is legalized." Eight percent of employers offering domestic partner benefits take this approach and limit their policies to same-sex couples.

Benefits *continues on page 10*


change people's minds about queer people generally and about same-sex marriage specifically. They have been great opportunities for queer and straight people to socialize together—sometimes within very traditional settings, sometimes not—and break the barrier of not being able to imagine such a thing.

I hope these couples in other states continue to have their own community-based celebrations so that those barriers will continue to come down and the marriage laws will expand from coast-to-coast.

There was this moment Monday night at Cambridge City Hall, just after midnight, when the crowd spontaneously broke into the National Anthem. At the time, I was turned off by the choice of song. After all, our national government is still actively seeking to add an absolute ban on same-sex marriage to the Constitution. Even today, the President issued a statement again blaming "activist judges" for the Massachusetts weddings occurring today. And it made me think about how this change has happened in our state. It's been democracy in action. People suing the state for having their rights impeded. The judiciary doing its part and deciding in favor of expanding rights. Even the legislature, with all the late night

sessions and multiple votes on bills, had a very important role (and will continue to) as this issue finally got taken seriously. Thousands of people who had never called a representative before or written a letter before or gone to a rally felt compelled to come out and give voice to their position—one way or the other. That is our system and this time it worked. WE are that system.

So today I feel better about singing, "The land of the free and the home of the brave." An awful lot of brave people are responsible for the remarkable changes that have taken place in Massachusetts.

Many people have been honored in the gay and lesbian community for their hard work. Today, let's give a huge thank you to all the bi people who have contributed to the struggle that brought about this monumental change. You rarely make it into the media but WE KNOW YOU ARE THERE! We see each other at the rallies, we cringe together as time after time same-sex marriage is referred to as "gay marriage," and we celebrate the fact that bis can now choose to legally commit to a partner—no matter who that person is. Now, that's worth taking to the streets for. 

ICB8 Workshops

Take a look at a few of the workshop to look forward to at the 8th International Conference on Bisexuality: Real Problems in Polyamory; Labels, Love and Life: Gay and Bisexual Husbands Come Out; Transgender Memoir Writing: Writing in Your Own Voice; Intersections of Transgender and Bisexual Identity in Sexual Orientation; Bi Ways: Telling Stories of our Lives and Loves; Feeling Good About Being Bisexual; Educating Others about Bisexuality; Bi Dating; Happiness Without Wedding Bells; Ask a Tranny; Het Today, Bi Tomorrow; Bisexuality and Biracial Identity; Songwriting with Future Lisa; Reel Bisexuals; Same Sex Domestic Violence; Intersex Issues; Therapist and Professional Roundtable; Borderzone Bisexuals.

BBWN Wants Your Used Books, CDs, VHS tapes, and DVDs!

Long-time member Gail Zacharias is helping BBWN with fundraising by listing used books, etc. on various online channels. 40% of the sale price will be donated to BBWN. If you have books to donate, please bring them to the BRC office, or contact Robyn (ochs@bi.org, 617-413-2717) to arrange for book transfer. The books must be in reasonably good shape—in particular, all pages must be present and readable (some highlighting and underlining is ok if it doesn't obscure the text), and the cover must be present and firmly attached to the pages (it's ok for the dust jacket of a hardcover to be missing). And the books mustn't be smelly (e.g. musty or smoky), since Gail will be storing them in her home!

THANKS THIS MONTH TO THE GENEROUS BOOK GIVERS BELOW:

[redacted] Sandy Hall & Peggy Gill; Robyn Ochs & Peg Preble, [redacted] & Melissa Marquis, Ellyn Ruthstrom

Benefits from page 9

This second approach is well-meaning, but there's a problem. Employers overstep their role when they restrict benefits to married families and deny them to unmarried ones, or inadvertently coerce unmarried families to marry because it's the only way to access quality health care. What will these employers do about their employees who live outside Massachusetts, where same-sex marriage isn't available? Is it worth the cost of administering multiple benefits plans for employees in different states? What if same-sex marriage in Massachusetts is overturned? Are employers really going to require domestic partners to bring in their new marriage licenses? Do they ask the same of their different-sex married employees? Don't be surprised if you start seeing legions of bald human resources staffpeople—they'll be pulling out their hair trying to make sense of it all.

So a small number of well-meaning employers made their first error by adopting same-sex-only domestic partner policies.

Error two—still entirely preventable—is to eliminate their policies entirely. By doing so, they're forcing GLBT employees in same-sex relationships to marry in order to continue to receive the same benefits. They're continuing to deny equal benefits to unmarried employees. And perhaps most importantly to those who study the bottom line, they're putting themselves at a competitive disadvantage. One survey of 279 human resources professionals representing 19 industries found that domestic partnership benefits were among the top three most effective incentives for recruiting new hires.

On average, domestic partner benefits increase a company's health care costs only 0.5% to 3%, yet they often yield major savings in employee recruitment and retention. That's partly because so few employees need to take advantage of them—most domestic partners each get insurance through their own jobs. But for that tiny number of employees whose families need them, the benefits can literally be a lifesaver (after all, the U.S. remains the only industrialized nation without universal health care). Access to family health benefits can easily be the deciding factor about what job to accept, or whether to stay at a job or find another that does offer the benefits. It's great news that for once, doing the right thing and saving on recruiting and retention costs doesn't break the piggybank and may even save a dime or two.

When Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BI) recently announced plans to

withdraw its domestic partner benefits policy, spokesman Jerry Berger said the advent of same-sex marriage is something to celebrate. We couldn't agree more. But the BI would be wise to celebrate by expanding its domestic partner benefits policy to the inclusive model, not by rescinding it entirely. If the BI and other employers with similar policies did so, they would join over 50 companies in Massachusetts who already provide health benefits to all employees' domestic partners without meddling in their marriage decisions, from FleetBoston to Gillette to New England Sinai Hospital. Even the American Medical Association's domestic partner plan is inclusive.

The bi community knows well that loving, committed relationships and families come in many shapes and sizes these days, including same-sex and different-sex, and married and unmarried. How sadly ironic it is that as Massachusetts makes history by recognizing same-sex marriages, some of the state's employers are making the decidedly regressive decision to eliminate their recognition of domestic partners. It's not too late to embrace the true spirit of equal pay for equal work, and recruit and retain top employees at the same time.

If you work for an employer that announces it plans to end its domestic partner policy, speak up! The Alternatives to Marriage Project can provide you with lots of resources, research, and ideas to make the case that same-sex marriage and domestic partnership can and should exist side by side. ▽

Marshall Miller and Dorian Solot are the founders of the national Alternatives to Marriage Project (www.unmarried.org) and the authors of Unmarried to Each Other: The Essential Guide to Living Together as an Unmarried Couple.

Visit BBWN online at:
biresource.org/bbwn
for a calendar listing of
local bisexual events.

CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

winners of the 2004 Sudden Fiction Contest, this evening is an open mic format with a supportive audience for women and their allies. Poetry and prose welcome. 5 and 10 minute slots available. 7:15 sign up, 7:30 start. \$5 at the door. Located at the Center for New Words, 186 Hampshire St., Cambridge, 617-876-5310.

June 19 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. This month we'll be brunching at the Garden of Eden, an excellent place in the South End. The address is 571 Tremont St. Nearest T stop is Back Bay on the Orange Line.

Tennis for Life Tournament on Cape Cod, Provincetown. The mixed doubles, round robin tournament will benefit local AIDS services and community organizations. For more info, please call 508-487-1930 or thecompact@comcast.net.

June 27 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Enjoy delicious vegetarian food at Buddha's Delight in Boston's Chinatown. On Beach Street between Harrison and Washington. Nearest T stop is Chinatown on the Orange Line. We will be joined by bisexual and bi-friendly people from the Unitarian/Universalist General Assembly, which is meeting in Boston this weekend. Note: Buddha's Delight has returned to its original ground-floor location.

June 28 ♦ Monday

Mixed Gender Poly Support Group, 6:30-8:45 p.m. This group is intended as a supportive environment to talk about poly-related issues in your life, to ask questions, or just to hear what other people have to say. At Fenway Community Health, 7 Haverland St., Boston. Check www.fenwayhealth.org/direction.htm for directions.

July 6 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Polyamory: Loving More Than One Person." See June 1st.

July 7 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See June 2nd.

July 13 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. See June 8th.

July 14 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 7-9 p.m. All bi community members welcome. See June 9th.

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-8:45 p.m. at the Diesel Cafe. See June 9th.

July 15 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See June 2nd.

July 16 ♦ Friday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Carrying a Tune: Music in Your Life." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA, 02140 or e-mail to nellythrustmor@aol.com.

July 17 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. A favorite brunch spot, Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square in Somerville always draws the biggest bi brunch crowd. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

July 20 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. The topic is: "Coming Out: Eternally...It's a neverending process." See June 1st.

July 26 ♦ Monday

Mixed Gender Poly Support Group, 6:30-8:45 p.m. See June 28th.

July 27 ♦ Tuesday

BiWomen mailing, 7 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Help BBWN get the newsletter out to women around the country.

July 29-August 2 ♦ Thursday-Monday

BiCamp in Western Massachusetts. The annual camping weekend for bi people and their friends. See page 7 for details or visit www.biversity.org/bicamp.html.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Saturdays: Dancing at Hollywood KTV, 41 Essex Street, Chinatown T, Boston. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. \$10 cover.

Sundays: Queer night, 9 p.m.-1a.m., the Milky Way, 403 Centre St, Jamaica Plain. DJ and dance floor.



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The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Tuesdays:

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: 617-354-8807.

First Wednesdays, Third Thursdays:

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

CALENDAR

June 1 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. A discussion group for bisexual, bi-friendly, and questioning women. Topic: "Can't We Just Be Friends?" Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

June 2 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-8:45 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

June 3 ♦ Thursday

Families Like Mine: Children of Gay Parents Tell It Like It Is, 7 p.m. Based on eight years of activism and interviews, *Families Like Mine* debunks the anti-gay myth that children of gay parents grow up damaged and confused. Abigail Garner's book also refutes the popular pro-gay sentiment that these children turn out "just like everyone else." Cosponsored by Alternative Family Matters. The reading is at the Center for New Words, 186 Hampshire Street, Cambridge, 617-876-5310.

June 5 ♦ Saturday

A National Lesbian Art Exhibit Opening Reception, 2-6 p.m. See the artwork of Sonia (from Disappear Fear), Lorraine Inzalaco, Paloma Rosales, Sudie Rakusin, Shoshona Rothaizer and Diana. Small Works Gallery, 57 Wingate Street, Haverhill. For more info call 978-764-2313 or artdreamer58@aol.com.

June 8 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. A support group for bi and lesbian women who are married or in long-term relationships.

Contact Denise at dpp1029@rcn.com for information. Call 617-354-8807 for directions.

June 9 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. All bi community members are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meeting is at the Living Center at 29 Stanhope Street in Back Bay.

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion

Group, 7-8:45 p.m. at the Diesel Cafe, 257 Elm Street in Somerville. T stop is Davis on the Red Line. The group meets to discuss issues relevant to women in the poly community, especially those of interest to queer women. We range from social chatting to more in-depth discussions, depending on what people want to talk about. If you haven't attended before, please email Donna at dalbino83@yahoo.com to arrange a way to recognize the group.

June 12 ♦ Saturday

BBWN Pre-Pride

Brunch, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Community Church of Boston at Copley Square, 565 Boylston Street. Start your Pride Day with the annual BBWN sponsored Bi Pride Brunch. The Bi Brunch is a great place to see old friends, make new ones, have some good food, and get psyched for the march. We ask for a \$5-10 sliding scale donation to cover the costs and hopefully make a little for the BBWN treasury. Nearest T stop is Copley on the Green Line. Fabulous bi T-shirts, Bi Resource Guides, buttons, and jewelry will be available.

Then join the bi contingent and march off at noon for the Boston Common! Would you like to be a volunteer at this year's event? If you would like to help set up, greet people at the door, or clean up afterwards, please contact Ellyn Ruthstrom at 617-623-5535 or nellythrustmor@aol.com.



June 15 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Bis in the Media." See June 1st.

June 17 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-8:45 p.m. See June 2nd.

June 18 ♦ Friday

New Voices Open Mic, 7:30 p.m. Featuring the

CALENDAR continues on page 11

Judy Glick, M.Ed., LMHC
licensed psychotherapist for lesbians,
gays, and bisexuals

- Enhancing self-esteem
- Recovery from incest/abuse
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Carrying a Tune: *Music in Your Life*

Hot For Rock: A Fangirl's Journey

By Robin Renée

My generation's Backstreet Boys came by way of Scotland. Maybe they were more like Spice Boys in tartan. Either way, The Bay City Rollers were the start of it all for me. Yes, I proudly give Les, Woody, Eric, Alan, and Derek full credit for lighting the spark that became my life's direction. True, something about them drew my nine-year-old mind to music and maybe that's why I play to this day. But they were also the start of something just as important: my perpetual state of unbridled groupiedom.

I'm a fangirl. I can't help it. It is my life, avocation, and destiny. Back in the Bay City Rollers days, my friends and I formed our own fan club in their honor. We played the records day and night (especially S-A-T-U-R-D-A-Y...night!), and convinced our parents to make us clothes like theirs. We ate Scotch broth and shortbread to get in touch with their roots. Of course, we talked about which one was cutest. I liked Les. Denise liked Eric. We swooned over our imaginary rendezvous with "the boys." That let's-create-a-band-that-makes-girls-act-like-they're-The-Beatles routine sure worked on us.

Then we graduated to The Beatles. Classic rock and singer-songwriters came in there, too. But for a time it was all about The Beatles. Since they played their last official show at Candlestick Park when I was two days old, I had a little catching up to do. So we created our own Beatlemania, circa 1978. Betty made mixed tapes from all the albums. I started to learn their songs on guitar and sometimes made up dirty parodies to crack everybody up. Lisa wore the best Beatle boots.

In 1980, John Lennon was murdered in the middle of our Beatlemania. We cried for days. I could cry now, looking back at all of us at fourteen, beyond grief.

There is something unique about the utter

Fangirl continues on page 12



A Song I Still Can't Listen To

By Marcia Deihl

There's a Christmas carol that neither my mother nor I can listen to. It's called "The Friendly Beasts." It's a sweet story as Christian hymns go, about all the animals helping the baby Jesus and his mother Mary the moment he is born. The cow gives his manger for a bed, the sheep gives wool for a warm blanket, the donkey carries Mary, etc. The last verse is the one—the doves coo him to sleep: "I said the dove from the rafters high / I cooed him to sleep, so he would not cry / We cooed him to sleep, my mate and I / I, said the dove from the rafters high."

It's that word—mate—that gets us.

One Christmas—I was two and half years old—my daddy pulled a nutty and was rounded up walking the streets and muttering that he was John Foster Dulles

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Volunteers of the Month

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Robyn Ochs
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Wayne Bryant
Katrina
Elena
Gina
Fennel
Robin Renée
Macia Diehl
Steph Miserlis

And many more
fabulous people!
You know who
you are!

BiWomen is published bi-monthly.

Editor:

Ellyn Ruthstrom

Printed on
recycled paper

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

Wow! What an issue!

This newsletter is jam-packed with so many different impressions about music. I thought this topic would be popular but I had NO IDEA what would turn up. Thank you to all the writers for your fabulous contributions to this issue! I didn't want to miss out on printing anything so this issue has expanded to 16 pages.

As the editor of *BiWomen*, I am always amazed at the wonderful experiences and insights people share with our readers. And I am relieved when my "Theme" folder fills up with enough material that I don't have to scramble around to write enough filler copy to fill in the gaps. This time, reading the varied responses to the musical topic, I was struck by how many people described the deep emotional connections to listening to particular music or creating music in their lives. And I thought I would just share a few simple memories I have.

My mother's life was filled with music. As a girl and young woman she had performed in amateur shows and musicals and though she never pursued a professional career she always needed music around her. A few of my fondest memories of her are when she would vacuum. She'd put an album (78s as they were called) on the hi-fi and turn it up real loud and then clean her way through the house, singing along with great enthusiasm and quite a bit of hip swaying. Other times when an album was playing or the radio was on she'd have to stop what she was doing and come out and grab my sister and brother and I to dance with her.

My mother was also tremendously afraid of thunder and lightning. When my dad was away on naval operations and a storm would come through at night she'd gather us into her bed for comfort. And while the bolts of lightning were flashing and booming, she'd have us all sing hymns together until the storm had passed. It seemed the right thing to do in the dark with nature's power crashing around us. I can't experience a late night summer storm without hearing her deep soprano rise above the din.

Ellyn Ruthstrom

Next in *BiWomen*

The *BiWomen* theme for
August/September is:

The Fiction Issue

Have you been spending time writing the great American short story? Why not share it with *BiWomen*? Or give us a review of the favorite piece of fiction you've read this summer. Let's swap stories about what a good story means to each of us.

Deadline: September 17, 2004

Future Issues

December/January

Biways: Your Life and Loves

Send your suggestions for future topics to
nellythrustmor@aol.com

Please Submit to
BiWomen!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,
black-and-white art, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to

NellyThrustmor@aol.com

If you do not want your name
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BBWN Financial Statement 1/1/04 through 6/30/04

Balance forward 1/1/04:	\$3,348.78
Expenses	
Printing	1,488.63
Postal fees & postage	338.50
Supplies	17.95
Merchandise purchased	75.00
Event expenses	514.79
Donation to IBC8 Scholarship fund	250.00
Total expenses	2,684.87
Income	
Dues	885.00
Merchandise	1,237.65
Bank Interest	5.37
Donations	100.00
Event income	350.00
Advertising	0
Book project income	3,025.59
Total income:	5,603.61
 Balance as of 6/30/03	 \$6,267.52

Hey, Bi Women:

Congratulations! Thanks largely to the book project (don't forget: we want YOUR used books!) we are in good shape. Let's keep up the good work: donate your books, or donate money! (See page 14 for details.)

Remember, BBWN is important! At 21 (22 in September!), we are the oldest bi women's group in the world, and *BiWomen* is the second oldest continuous bi publication in the world (after *Bi Nieuws* in the Netherlands). We have no paid staff, and no regular sources of income. We have a longstanding policy of making *BiWomen* available to everyone, regardless of their ability to pay, and the newsletter is given away at conferences and other public venues, and is mailed free of charge to many colleges and other community organizations. For many women, *BiWomen* is their first affirmation of bisexuality.

Checks can be sent to BBWN or, if you wish your donation to be tax deductible, you may channel it through our parent organization, BRC (P.O. Box 1026, Cambridge MA 02117)—be sure to put "for BBWN" in the comment line. ▽

Submitted by Robyn Ochs, Treasurer for BBWN since 1989

Brunch Coordinator Wants You to Host!

BBWN potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area. We try to hold a brunch in a member's home each month so that people can relax and share food and experiences in a safe space. Deb Morley is the brunch coordinator, so please contact her at debmo345@comcast.net if you are interested in hosting a brunch. Thanks Deb for volunteering! There are some great brunches coming up in August and September. See the calendar on pages 15-16 for more details.

BBWN Co-founder Weds in Massachusetts

By Robyn Ochs

After seven years together as a couple, Peg and I were married on Monday morning, May 17—the very first possible day shortly before 10 a.m. Fortunately, we received a lot of media coverage so we are able to share this wonderful moment with important people in our lives (as well as with total strangers).

We were overjoyed about our own marriage, and were made exponentially happier knowing that so many of our friends and neighbors (and total strangers) were also in the same position that we were in. We got up at 4:30 in the morning and went down with four other couples from our immediate neighborhood and with our friends "the Jennifers" to wait on line at Brookline Town Hall. Sarah Rowley and our friends Clémence and Barusch accompanied us to provide support and to witness history being made.

We went through the process—filing our intention to marry, going across the street to the courthouse to request our waiver of the three-day waiting period, and then back to Town Hall. After a short wait our names were called for our 9:30 appointment with the Town Clerk. While waiting we were surrounded by supportive and excited employees of Brookline, smiling volunteers from GLAD, and by reporters from NPR, Channel 4, Channel 5, Channel 56, the Tufts Daily, the Brookline Tab, the Brookline Chronicle, as well as two videographers, a reporter and a photographer from the Washington Post. Then we were called in. Most of the press squeezed in with us, along with eight of our friends (most of whom were also there to apply for their own licenses).

By 10 a.m., Peg and I became the first same-sex couple ever married in Brookline Town Hall and one of the first couples married in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. ▽



Call for Participants

Do you identify as genderqueer, transgender and/or MTF/FTM? Have you ever experienced verbal harassment or physical/sexual assault as a result of your gender expression? Would you be willing to be interviewed about your experiences? An undergraduate student at Wellesley College is conducting a senior thesis on hate crimes experienced by trans/genderqueer people in the Boston area. By talking to as many people as possible about their experiences, she hopes this thesis can document and raise awareness about violence targeted at the trans and genderqueer community. She is looking for people of any and all age groups, races, ethnicities, sexual orientation, stage of transition, gender identity, and class. Your interview or interviews will be completely ANONYMOUS. Your privacy and comfort level will be respected at ALL TIMES. There is no payment for participation. Interviews will be conducted until December 2004. Contact Clare McBee-Wise at cmcbewi@wellesley.edu if you are interested.

Music Lessons

By Steph Miserlis

One of my first piano students was a little boy of 7. Carlton was very sensitive, bright, sweet, and constantly looking for affirmation. He loved playing the 'boogie', in addition to his scales. When he struggled playing with one hand, his other hand always went to the top of his head for some reason. He was always excited about his lessons. And at this point, I knew I wanted to be a music teacher.

After a while, I became more used to the quirks and oddities of my students, but no less enamored by some of them. Another one of my first students was David. He couldn't sit still for the life of him. He was 11 at the time. At first, he just *had* to learn Avril LaVigne's "Complicated." After a couple seconds it became ColdPlay. Then, finally, with great aplomb he'd announce, "I want to learn Beethoven's *Fur Elise*." Of course, after two weeks of that, he wanted to play something else. He had the attention span of a gnat. And I still loved working with him. Talk about excitement for music!

As a music teacher, I quickly learned that everyone learns music so differently, just like everyone relates to it so differently. Some students just had to touch the instrument. These students had a natural and coordinated physical knack for playing. Some had to hear it before they'd even consider touching the keys...and then, as if by magic, they could play by ear. Some couldn't be bothered unless they understood the whole theoretical concept of everything. And then there was the emotion of the music. Everyone had a different attachment that manifested in a different way. I remember one student only wanted to play Chopin's *Nocturne, Op 9, in E-flat*. And at the same time, he only listened to country music. Go figure.

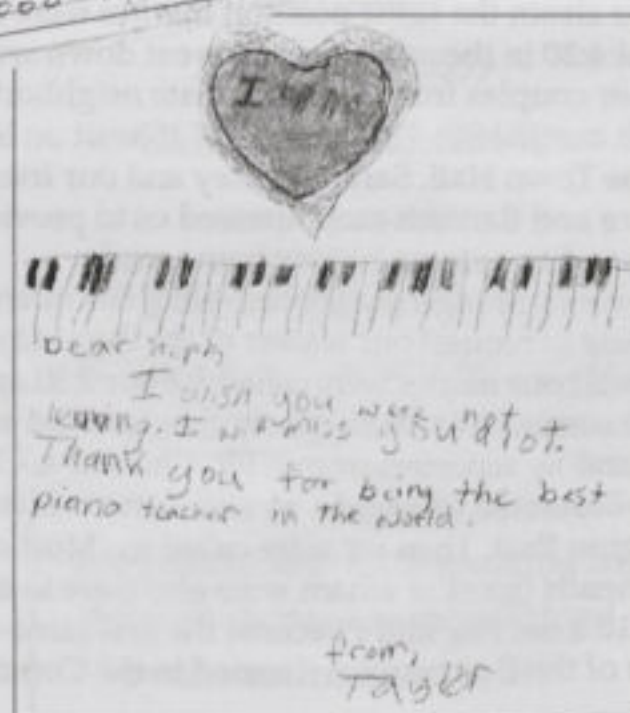
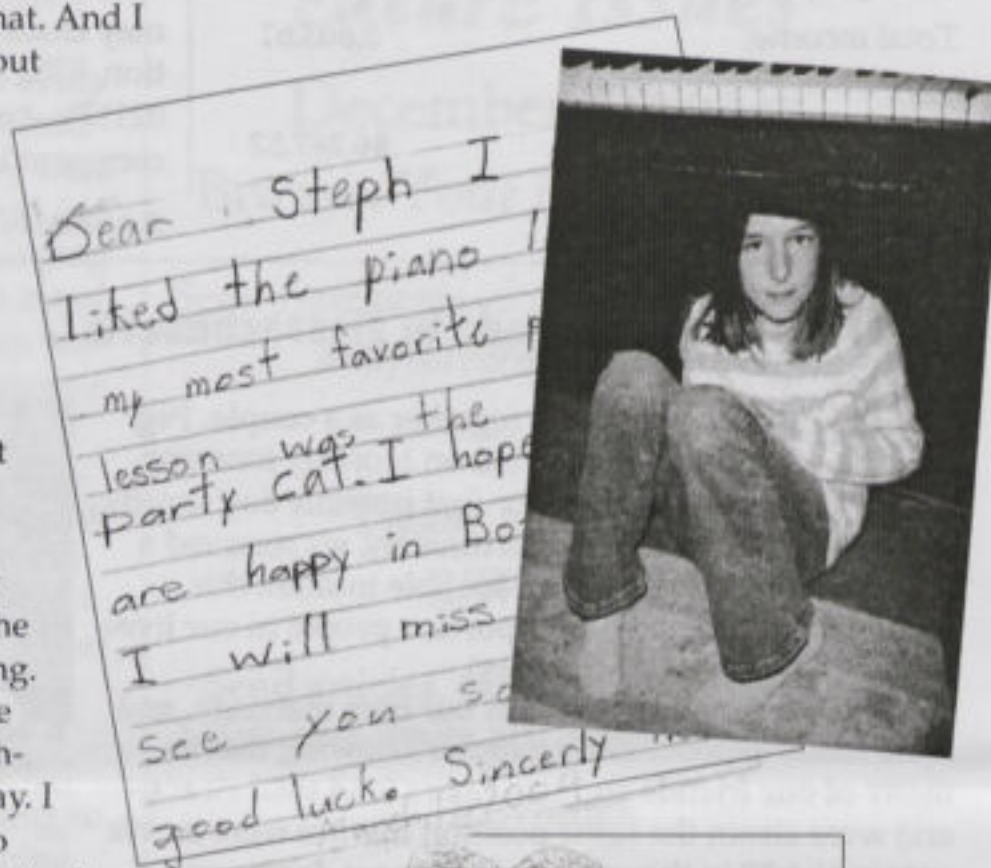
It was such a huge learning experience for me working with all these varied people, and with such a rich subject. Teaching music is so much more personal than anything I've ever taught. It touches people so much more immediately and deeply than anything else I've worked with. It's intimate. And with this intimacy comes a need for a healthy boundary.

I took my students' progress and enjoyment so personally. One time Ellyn, (yup, the same famous newsletter editor Ellyn) visited me in Santa Fe. She was sitting in the car

waiting for me to finish up with Carlton. His mother saw Ellyn, and then freaked out. Carlton's mother anxiously asked my colleague if I was gay. When she learned the truth, she pulled Carlton from my lessons, never outright telling me why. I had to learn it second-hand. Even when I confronted Carlton's mother, she didn't own it.

Needless to say, I was upset, and of course, took it personally. First off, *Ellyn*? It's not like she's a leather butch on a bike with her breasts strapped down, and a shaved head. (Not that there's anything wrong with that, mind you.) Secondly, didn't Carlton's mother already know? I had my gay stickers plastered on my car, and I'm not the most discrete person on the planet. But mostly—how could she do this to Carlton? He loved playing. He loved his lessons. And he loved his music. And I loved teaching him. And that was my biggest music lesson of all time.

I may see Carlton again, playing jazz piano in a bar...and I may not. But, I know he has been exposed.



A Review of *A Meeting by the River*

Reviewed by [REDACTED]

Lately I've been feeling pretty stressed out. The perpetual state of looking for a job with some other stuff thrown in is a large part of it. Also, reading and listening to the news is wearing on me. So much to think about-too much really. When I need a break, and recently it feels more important somehow, I turn to music. I will tell you about a quiet, soothing work, one that helps my mind rest. It is called *A Meeting by the River* and it is a collaboration between Ry Cooder and V.M. Bhatt, released by Water Lily Acoustics.

You may know Ry Cooder as a musician who, starting sometime around the 1970's wove together music from many parts of the world such as Africa, Asia,, South America and in this work, Indian. A musician, composer and musicologist, Cooder's love of traditional music is evident in his work and frequent collaborations. V.M. Bohat is an instrumentalist from Jaipur who plays North Indian Classical (Hindustani) music on an instrument that he designed. Inspired by the slide guitar and an Indian instrument called the Vichitra vina that is played with a steel rod against metal strings, Cooder instead plays a slide guitar using glass against steel strings.

At midnight the men met in a motel lobby and moved on to a chapel and prepared to

record. With no pre-planning at all the two men improvised what you hear on this recording. Cooder's son Joachim plays the tabla and the dumbek as the accompanying rhythm. The pieces were unrehearsed and unplanned, however Cooder wanted to give it some framework. He came up with the idea to use a translation of a Rumi poem as a theme for the players. Unfortunately, the liner notes do not give the actual translated poem.

The result coalesces into beautiful winding, sometimes meandering songs. It is soft and punctuated by the building of intense moments that yield back to subtlety and grace of the quietest moments.

"Today, like every other day, we wake up
empty and frightened.
Don't open the door to the study and
begin reading.
Take down a musical instrument.
Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and
kiss the ground"

-Jelaluddin Rumi

For a balm to your spirit check out the
calming acoustic guitar music of Cooder and
Mohan. I hope you enjoy it! ▼

August Brunch Out in the Boonies

Just kidding, Stephanie. The August potluck BBQ will be held at noon on Sunday, August 22 in a "beautiful bucolic woodsy surrounding" (the host has claimed) so get ready for some non-urban fun. As usual with our brunches, you are asked to bring something to share and something you would want to grill. Contact Stephanie at sbaird@bikerider.com or call 617-359-6969 for directions and other questions. For those without cars, the commuter rail goes to Franklin and we can try to coordinate a pick up at the station. Get away from the city for the day and come relax with a bunch of bi babes as the summer draws to a close.

THOUGHTS ON MUSIC

Wow, what a great topic. The role of music in my life is huge. Think back to Free to be You and Me? Remember that song about doing housework to music makes it go faster? Well, music can enhance everything from reading to lovemaking. One of my favorite books is Tune Your Brain by Elizabeth Miles. It has a chapter on various moods-focus, uplift, cleanse, etc. You can pick the mood you are in and transition to one you want to be in.

OK, some specific favorites: Rose Polanzani and Deb Talan, Edie Carey are a few of my many favorites. They are brilliant lyricists and poets. Rose sings about loving women. The song "I've Got to See You Again" by Norah Jones.

- ◆ Massage-anything by Mazzy star, Mozart
- ◆ Bathing and reading-Bach Unaccompanied cello suites
- ◆ Cleaning house-Arrested Development anything upbeat

By Fennel

Don't you hate it when you love an artist and they get overplayed and you get sick of them?

Listening to it: Passim is a great place to discover amazing talent and enjoy good veggie food at once.

Take a sound bath: turn off your phone and just lie down and listen to a song in all its glorious nuance with all your focus. Really be with that song-you'll hear it like never before.

Organizing your music: You can organize your music by genre or artist. I like to do it by categories in case logic zip wallets-energizing or relaxing. Julie Morgenstern who wrote *Organizing From the Inside Out* recommends a vertical not horizontal storage. Horizontal gets disrupted every time you pull one out. This is why I'm selling my funky cd tower.

I could go on and on but I have some music to listen to... ▼

BBWN 5th Annual Book Swap Brunch

It's back for the 5th year in a row! The annual BBWN Book Swap Brunch at Ellyn's in Somerville, Noon. Along with relaxing and chatting, we'll be looking over books others have brought to swap. You won't go away empty handed. What's left over will go towards the BBWN book drive to raise money for the organization (See page 14 for details.) This year Ellyn asks that you not bring an overabundance of books. Please bring newer books that if people are not interested in they would be appropriate for selling as used online. And to mark Celebrate Bisexuality Day (September 23), we'll be talking about any of our favorite bisexual people who have influenced us in our lives. Please bring the usual potluck dish and drinks to share. Contact Ellyn at nellythrustmor@aol.com or 617-623-5535.

Music Alone Shall Live, Part I

By Marcia Diehl

I come by music honestly. My paternal grandmother, Edna Groff Deihl, gave up a concert pianist career to marry my grandfather and raise six children. But she kept writing children's books and songs and gave piano lessons in her front parlor. The family story goes that she "fell in love with my grandfather Deihl's "big beautiful bass voice" in the church choir and married him, even though she'd been to college and he hadn't. One of Edna's sons, my Uncle Bob, created a radio show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, called "The Musical Philosopher." I know this from her diary, in which she opines, "I think Bob needs a little more music and a little less philosophy," something I would hear about myself as well.

My Uncle Bill wrote lovely classical pieces somewhat along the lines of Aaron Copeland. My Dad, who couldn't read a note of music, played guitar and piano by ear. He loved singing folk songs, and when I was born in Asheville, North Carolina, he and Uncle Bill wrote me a five-verse country western song called "On July the Twentieth My Girl Was Born." Every July 20th, a few cousins call me up and sing it to me.

I was brought up listening to "Abdul Abulbul Amir," "Shine On Harvest Moon, and "Blue Heaven," all sung by Dad around the house and when he was a camp director at Camp Whitman, the Presbyterian Camp I attended every summer. Our special father-daughter duet was "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes" from the Fireside Book of Folk Songs. (I later found out that this book was considered subversive during the McCarthy era, due to its international liberation songs and risqué drawings!).

As for my mother, she sang in the Trenton Opera Company for years, while having an affair with the director, a "crazy hotheaded Russian." When my father came along and appeared as the handsome new assistant minister at her church, she too "fell in love with his big bass voice," and left it all behind to be a preacher's wife. She always sang when she dusted and cooked, songs like "O Sleep, Why Dost Thou Leave Me?" and "Consider the Lilies of the Field." Now I know why these particular songs might have been on her top ten list as a young housewife after a life of performances

and parties with the likes of the young Leonard Bernstein.

By the time I was born, we were destined to be a family act. Four people, four parts. Dad was the bass, Mother was the soprano, and sometimes I think they had me just to have an alto to complete the picture with my brother as the tenor. We were insufferably cute, very "Father

Knows Best" with me as Kitten, caroling about the neighborhood. We also hit the nursing homes, a definite captive audience. But the loved my parents hokey Hillbilly and "Gay Nineties" routines, in costume. My specialty was playing my recorder (a plastic sort of penny whistle) through my nose. They loved it. When my brother and I grew older, he in high school and me in junior high, we produced plays and musicals with the church's big tape recorder. We made fun of my Dad's sermons by splicing in jokes and composed extemporaneous operettas based on television shows like Dr. Kildare. I made baby bird noises with my French horn

and he played piano as I riffed out songs. As a high school senior, my brother Dave wrote, scored, and conducted a piece for his now-wife Carol. He left for college and worked on a prototype of the Moog synthesizer, and I was left behind to write anguished love songs for my teachers.

If it weren't for music, I'd probably still be a virgin. I've always found my lovers through music. Sophomore year of college I met David, a sweet flute player who looked like John Lennon. I was his harpsichord accompanist, backing him up on stage in a velvet gown for his senior recital in 1971. David turned out to be gay, not just "f---d up" and we parted ways by fading slowly away in 1973. In 1974, I had moved in to the Rounder Records "Collective" and started working on my women's songbook and playing in the New Harmony Sisterhood Band. A year later, I met Robert, a blues player/con man/deadbeat dad with a great sense of ironic humor. He needed a fiddle player in his band and he presented me with a fiddle so I could learn it and join his band. He liked more than one girlfriend and I left him after two years.

Three years later, "Kit," the first healthy relationship I'd ever had, and yes, a woman. I had envied my lesbian friends their relatively sane relationships, and "Kit" was used to the



women's music scene and knew all the then-stars. Alas, that did not last either, as I found out I'm definitely a Kinsey 2, not 6. After eight years of recovery and inner renovations (including, not incidentally, coming out as bi and co-founding BBWN), I met "Dexter." He was a psychologist and a musician, and our bands shared a bill one day. He had heard me sing a silly song I wrote about Magazine Street years before and had a crush on me for years. After that relationship bit the dust in 1989, I met Tom, a carpenter who gave me a ride to a wedding and had seen me play at the Idler ten years earlier. All of these lovers saw me at my most charmingly public best, and perhaps they thought I would be like that around the house. I was not.

During the good times, music has been there like a lover, standing by and comforting me. When I turned thirty, unmarried and still rather footloose, I got tired of my parents telling me they were saving things to give me till I was "settled." I sent out invitations declaring that as on my thirtieth birthday, I was "settled." And that "family heirlooms and gifts will be accepted at this time." It started as a joke, but evolved into a song and a much copied celebration to this day. (Now that gay marriage is happening all around me, I have reconsidered my song. How can I pass on marriage now? Why not? It's still about options and separation of church and state.)

The chorus goes:

"I'm settled . . . whoa, I'm settled,
No hubby, no house, no car, no kid,
And no regrets for what I didn't or I did,
I'm settled . . . whoa, I'm settled,
And when I turn thirty gonna give a big
party
Just to say "I declare I'm settled!"

And the last verse says,

"Bring on the crockpots, silver and towels,
I'll put them in my home and get settled."

Did my parents get upset at my proud declaration of spinsterhood? Au contraire—they sent a telegram reading, "Good luck to daughter from Muddah and Faddah/A girl of mettle will never settle!"

During bad times, I have used music the way a cat purrs and grooms, for comfort. I find myself singing my grandmother's favorite old hymn, "O joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee, I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain that morn shall tearless be." Coworkers and roommates always tell me I'm humming or whistling. My internal muzak often tells me what I'm feeling. When it's not there at all, I'm usually anxious or grieving. When it's there, it's fun to catch the song and see if it's a lyric that made it arise. Often it's "I know I need a small vacation" from "Wichita Lineman."

When I was growing up, our house was filled with Mother and Dad's humming, a constant aural wallpaper. I wasn't conscious of this fact until I visited them about ten years ago in their little retirement apartment. All three of us were fixing lunch in the tiny kitchen and as we dodged each other in a sort of slow motion ballet. I noted that each of the three of us were humming a separate tune, oblivious to the others (indicative of the family dynamic, I must say!).

We also shared a certain musical tactic—a subtle form of passive-aggression I'd call it now—singing a little tune a little too loud and a little too forced, during moments of tension. It's almost as if we were hoping that the tune would propel itself into the primary shared reality and erase the lingering emotional tension. Of course that doesn't work; it's like putting perfume over body odor, it's "whistling in the dark." When mother used to cook a large family meal for company, she'd use that special whistle, inbreath and outbreath. You did not bother her then. ▽

BiCon 2004 in Manchester, England

The 22nd annual United Kingdom Bisexual Conference is taking place August 26-30 in Manchester, England. There will be workshops on topics ranging from polyamory, BDSM, bi activism, mental health in the bi community, commitment, drag kings and queens, and much more. Contact web@bicon2004.org.uk for more information or write to: BM BiCon, London, WC1N 3XX. Check out the website at www.bicon2004.org.uk.

Did you go to 8ICB in Minneapolis?

If you attended the 8th International Bisexual Conference in Minneapolis in August, would you like to write about it for *BiWomen*? How about send your pictures along to be included in the next issue? Write to Ellyn at nellythrustmor@aol.com and send along stories of your experiences and photos of all the fun.



Bis were out and proud this year, with a vibrant contingent marching with the BRC banner on a gorgeous Pride day in Boston.

BiWomen Back Issues

Do you have back issues of *BiWomen*? We have a full set of *BiWomen* newsletters (from 1983 to the present) with the exception of two missing issues: August/September 1988, and June/July 1990. Do you have either or both of these somewhere in your personal archives? Please do check as it would be great to have a complete set on file, as we continue to make bisexual/feminist/women's/glbtiq history! Contact Robyn Ochs at ochs@bi.org.

Music Alone Shall Live, Part II

By Marcia Diehl

Although, in the objective sense, music is made up of mere pitch and rhythm, it can be used by angels and devils alike. There's Adolph Hitler's rousing military music helping masses march forward into war and worse. The most mind boggling fact that I learned in *Fahrenheit 9-11* was that the soldiers in Iraq who were about to run around and raid houses and point rifles at possible snipers had hate-filled rock music playing from helmet earpieces. And I have not even mentioned internal devils. A workmate and I used to goad each other by walking up to each others' desks and bursting out with "What's New, Pussycat?" We knew that any Tom Jones song was like mental musical flypaper. What makes a song take you hostage and stay on your inner muzak like that? Music spans both sides of the brain, and it is used for medical and outer space breakthroughs. It unites art, logic, and emotion. I know many people who only shed a tear at a childhood song heard after years and all of a sudden they "are" five again. I can feel it in my head, living up there in a suburb of my cerebral cortex's busy neighborhood.

The word "gift" has become a cliché, but I feel that a love and need to do music is a gift I was given free at birth. It came along with other things I share with my relatives: the family duck walk that I got from my Dad (toes slightly out as you walk), the proclivity to soar too close to the sun creatively and emotionally, then crash and burn. These things are like beads on my genetic corkscrew, generations of preaching grandfathers and singing grandmothers, from England and Germany to Pennsylvania and beyond. I believe that my "good crazy" genes and my "bad crazy genes" (sort of like cholesterol) can go both magic and manic. At age forty, my Uncle Bob became an unemployed, clever, angry alcoholic and lives out his years in a VA hospital. Uncle Bill, drunk and depressed, stepped in front of a train at age 35. We always called it an accident; much better for the widow. My father escaped these more

drastic fates, but both he and I have found ourselves "on the wrong side of the desk" in hospitals where we could have performed for the "poor mentally ill patients" decades before.

In fact, when I did my time in "The Meadows" about sixteen years ago, my musical brain was so intact that I played guitar and led the group singalongs. "Clinical depression" they called it, and I didn't mind being there as much as I had minded pretending to be normal on the outside. Ex-lovers, my current love,

friends, fellow recovery buddies and musical and political comrades visited in a steady stream that first week. I was used to always putting on a show, and here I was, dull and dumpy in a smoke-filled cold room with nothing to offer all of these people. It took that amount of drama to let in the fact that people whose lives had crossed mine actually loved me at my worst.

The third day I was there, my then a

capella group, The Oxymorons, came to visit—Jeff, Kate, and Mark. I was sitting on my bed when they gently knocked and came into the room. At first they were distracted by the red flannel mountain on the other bed. It was Tracy, my roommate, a fourteen-year-old ex-gang member who spent all her time sitting under her red blanket, ignoring everyone. Did I tell her I was a singer? I'm not sure. I kept pretty quiet after she informed me that she was going to "get me for April Fool's Day." I knew enough of her background from our group therapy sessions to expect anything from a flaming turd in the wastebasket to a short-sheeted bed. When she figured out I had company, one eye poked out from under the corner of the blanket.

"So, how's it going?" asked Kate.

"I'm alive and vertical," I answered.

I loved these guys. Ten years younger than I, and we'd always spent as much time laughing in rehearsals as singing. But the day they visited, we all knew there wasn't much to laugh about.

"How about we sing something?" offered Jeff. Kate, his fiancée at the time as well as a keyboard player in the feminist rock band "The



Girllilas," and Mark, a classical music student and zen practitioner, agreed. Mark had given me a little book by his zen master, not knowing that my brain had stopped working—shorted out?—and I could not read. Besides, I didn't need to "be here now"—that was my problem. I couldn't get out of the sensual moment, no past, no future, I could not hold any thought more than a few seconds. If you're "in the moment" against your will all the time, believe me, honey, it ain't fun. It's terrifying.

We ended up singing "Trauma to the Kitty!" which I wrote about taking my cat to the vet. The words were silly and slightly mean: "Drive the kitty home, you make a fast stop/Make the little kitty go flippety flop. Trauma to the Kitty!" complete with my yowling kitty break. I remembered every word and note, same with "Chevrolet, Chevrolah" and our other songs.

By the end of this impromptu concert, Tracy, who periodically peeked out for the first song or two, was laughing and shouting "WOO! WOO!" We'd earned it. So I wasn't lost; my soul must have been intact. From under my flannel mountain, sleeping pills, and medications, I hadn't forgotten one note. But the visit was over, and I went back to life in the psych ward. Too much noise, smoke, marching to a schedule and random indignities.

It wasn't until halfway through the endless afternoon of April 2 that I realized: Tracy had never "gotten" me! In a place where I had no control, a tiny bit of music had seeped into Tracy's tough little heart. Soon the music therapist heard about me and she asked me to lead our rare singing sessions. "Wildfire," "Autumn to May," and "Puff the Magic Dragon," all those dorky songs I learned as a music education major. Can you just see it? A solemn circle of perfectly smart, pitifully lost adults, singing those idiot songs? How could I lead community singing when I couldn't "remember" how to read? And I cried. The only time I could cry was when I was singing.

It was that damn "Puff" that did it. I had been a magical dragon, a hermit in a cave, but one day a man invited me to join him in his cave, and I lost my magic. I was a butterfly and he crushed my magic. I had turned into a butterfly. I had almost died, but had ended up where I was, playing a guitar in a fuckin' nuthouse. Or that's how I felt.


Needless to say, I came back from this "nervous breakthrough." I had to learn some things about my family, including my father's breakdown at the exact same age I was, about not using my logic for matters of the heart (or the libido!). Years later, about ten years ago, I was visiting my parents on the New Jersey

shore where they had vacations for decades. My father was just starting to get sick, and I noticed his shuffling walk, his vacant eyes, his husklike flesh as he walked, swish-swash, swish-swash down the sidewalk toward the ocean. My father had my old zombie walk from six years before; I knew that walk. But when I sat next to him in church that Sunday, his rich bass voice was just as strong as ever. I sang alto, of course, sometimes jumping to tenor, and Mother took up her soprano part automatically. I couldn't help crying, right in church, sensing that this might be one of the last times. He died of Parkinson's disease six years later. Meanwhile, I had started going back to church, just to sing hymns and cry for him. It's a lovely way to talk with him on a Sunday morning.

When Dad couldn't walk, he could sing. When I couldn't think, I could sing. Music alone stayed with us. Music alone . . . a phrase from one of those camp songs, "All things shall perish from under the sky / Music alone shall live, music alone shall live / Music alone shall live, never to die."

MY FAVORITE BISEXUAL SONGS:

- ◆ The Handsome Cabin Boy (traditional British)
- ◆ The Female Drummer (traditional British)
- ◆ Masculine Women! Feminine Men! (flapper song from 1920s)
- ◆ Song for Left Handed Rights by Joanna Cazden (1977)—contains the verse, "I can not hire to babysit the young girl living next to us / For I heard her tell the children that she is . . . ambidextrous! What's more, she had the nerve to say that anyone can learn the fulfilling conscious joy of using either hand by turn!"
- ◆ I'm BiCentennial! by Martin Mull ("I'm bicentennial, I just found out today / I'm bicentennial, I'll go either way, I'm screwed by Auntie Poverty, I'm screwed by Uncle Sam, yes I'm bicentennial, that's just the way I am!" Oh, you knew he WAS. How about reviving this one? Of course it was written in 1976. If you ever meet Martin, sing it for him!
- ◆ 200% Song by Norm Davis (we sang it at a few bi converences in the 1980s),
- ◆ And my most recent solidarity song, to the tune of "Love and Marriage":

Bis and trannies, bis and trannies,
Go together like Grandpas and Grannies,
Any "pref" or gender,
Bis and trannies go together!" 

LGBTI Health Summit 2004

The 2nd Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Health Summit will be held August 25-29, 2004, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel in Cambridge, Massachusetts. If you care about LGBTI health and wellness, join fellow activists, researchers, community members, health care professionals, and allies at the summit. Following the pattern of past summits, Wednesday's Pre-Summit Institutes will allow for a full day of focused discussion and skill-building. Thursday through mid-day Sunday will be a varied program of workshops, plenaries, community events, and recreational activities. The hotel is centrally located on the Charles River and close to public transportation. Check out the website's programming page at www.healthsummit2004.org/programming.htm. For questions not answered by the website, please contact tlewis@jsi.com.

Provincetown Harbor Swim for Life

The 17th Annual Provincetown Harbor Swim for Life & Paddler Flotilla will be held September 11, 2004. The swim and flotilla raises money for various AIDS, women's health and youth organizations on the Cape. Each swimmer/paddler is expected to raise a minimum of \$100 in pledges. Check out the website at www.swim4life.org for registration information and more details.

STANDING IN 3 FEET OF MERCURY

Part 1: In the Audience

by Stephanie B.

My musical odyssey began for me as it does, I imagine, for most: hearing the radio play in my parents' car driving the family around town when I was a wee one. I can remember getting extremely excited whenever Rod Stewart's song "If you want my body and you think I'm sexy..." came on the radio. However, my young ears of age 5 or 6 thought I was hearing "If you want my money and you think I'm sexy..." What a message about sex and money to pick up at such a tender age. But, thank goodness for Donny and Marie Osmond. Two wholesome kids..." a little bit country and a little bit rock-n-roll." Again, I was mesmerized and completely head over heels in love...with both singers. The Bee Gees also rounded out my first collection of 45s. I loved spinning those tiny records on my Fisher Price (c) record player—the kind with the red trim, plastic detachable top, and carrying handle! The first portable boom box—you just needed a plug to take your music with you.

As I grew older, my musical tastes grew more sophisticated. Depeche Mode (always a sexy group to drool over and debate about their sexual orientation), Erasure, New Order, O.M.D.—you guessed it, I was a New Waver who graduated high school on the cusp of the eighties/nineties. While my first concert was the very elite "Bangles" at Six Flags (replete with my mother in attendance to chaperone), the first one I truly remember was Depeche Mode (with OMD as an opening act—in fact, I was originally more fond of OMD, but became a Depeche Mode convert at the concert). I had pressed my way through the packed, teeming throngs, making my way to the front of the general admission lawn seating to be pressed against a railing so tight I almost left with crushed ribs (my bra did manage to get unlatched sometime during the night). I lost my group of friends in the crowd, but gained unparalleled views of Martin Gore and Co.

Entering college, I rode in on a sea of grunge, cresting on the waves of Nirvana and Pearl Jam. College was a time of the local scene, crowding into small venues such as converted opera houses, stage diving, and crowd surfing to favored local band lyrics such as, "Be a bush-roaming mammal, get back to your roots, shed your threads, get in your mother suit, free your

pores and you'll smell much better, do the Seminole and remove that clutter. Take it off, put it in the attic, we're going to be in *National Geographic*." (Billy Goat—a band from my native homeland Texas). These lyrics, and others just as goofy and revealing, made quite the impression on my naïve person.

College ignited my love for the local, the underappreciated, and the small live venue. Seeing familiar faces at shows, collecting independently-produced CDs, getting to know band members, and broadening music tastes and exposure through an ever widening network was and still is the best way for me to get musically educated. I

continue to find out about most of my new favorites, such as Rilo Kiley and The Postal Service, through friends or through college radio (Thank you, WERS, ya'll are a godsend of the distinct, original, and funky).

I found out about another favorite musician, Kinny Starr, at the Michigan's Womyn's Music Fest. (Talk about music and women overload—the powerful onslaught of visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile senses with beauty, rhythm, and melody! I have written entire treatises on attending Michfest.) For me, Kinny Starr's lyrics in her song "Happy" (circa 1999) sum it up best when specifically thinking about bisexuality and music: "boy lips on boy lips fits perfect and you know it, girl lips on girl hips is perfect can we show it. And I have eyes and I know boy and girl fits, too. We lay together, make a mess and then we share our love juice." While I have enjoyed the prominent bisexual musicians such as Ani DiFranco and Jill Sobule (her revelatory "I kissed a girl"), I must admit, I've got a problem with Ani's breathy, strangled voice, and Jill is just too cute for words. I like my underdogs best.

Part 2: In the Band

I have done my share of dabbling in making music over the years, from the requisite piano lessons in elementary school, a little viola in middle school, some guitar in grad. school, and now finally settling on the electric bass. I had a weird musical awakening about a year and a half ago, during February 2003 (the winter where the ground




remained covered in snow almost the entire season, provided just enough allergy relief for my creative self to experience "flow"). I started writing songs (melodies and lyrics) every free moment of the waking day, and began accessing the peeps in my life to bring music to my fingers. Turns out I knew a lot of musicians who were willing to show me the basics on the bass, consult with me around equipment and instrument purchase (my bass is a gorgeous mahogany and blond wood Washburn, affectionately dubbed "NV," after the first 2 letters of her serial number), and even spend a couple days recording a demo of 4 songs with a friend singing the lyrics. The universe had definitely coalesced, opening the gateway to musician-ship.

Up until that February, I had been exclusively participating in a drumming circle for about half a year. Looking back, I can say that the circle was probably the single most influential activity that, how can I put it, opened the chakras to music. I began bass lessons last September, and am now in a rock band playing some covers (Nirvana—"Smells like Teen Spirit," Pearl Jam—"Corduroy," etc.—see how

those influential times never quite leave ya) and some originals. The female guitarist wanted to play a Melissa Etheridge song, too. I then brought up Melissa Ferrick's "Drive," and in the conversation came out as bisexual. Imagine my surprise when my band mate replied, "Me, too." We are everywhere!

This odyssey of learning the notes, scales, sounds, blues riffs, chord progressions, rhythms, beats...this has been the best part of the evolution thus far. Thank god for my early foundation of piano playing and music reading...this early skill paved the way for a workable transition into the technical aspects of bass playing such as music reading. Music really is a whole other language, and an intuitive way of nonverbally communicating with those around you, especially when jamming, or in a drumming circle, or just playing your favorite songs for others. One of my first acceptable lyrics I wrote last year captures my music induction/immersion perfectly: "Standing in 3 feet of mercury, and my boots don't touch the ground...is it any wonder that destiny turns into destination."

The journey continues... 

New Plays Sought by SLAMBoston

Another Country Productions, producers of SLAMBoston, *Diverse Voices in Theater*, is soliciting new plays for the fall slams. The producers are particularly interested in plays about people of color, transgendered folk and people with disabilities. Send plays, no longer than 12 pages, to Another Country Productions, P.O. Box 560192, West Medford, MA 02156.

Another Country Productions presents SLAMBoston monthly at the Jimmy Tingle Off-Broadway Theater in Somerville. The slam is a 10-minute play competition, done in a poetry slam format. The winning playwright takes home a cash prize.


Song from page 1

and his boss was out to get him. As they wheeled him to the psych hospital, he called my mother a whore and let out an unearthly scream. She was left with me and my brother, four years my elder, and nowhere to live. It was Christmas, and we had to go live with my grandmother in Trenton. Without her handsome, charming husband, who had been studying for the ministry, she soldiered on, not sure if he would ever come back. She was very like the wife in "A Beautiful Mind," in love, and also of that generation where women wouldn't even consider leaving their man for such a thing. My mother was always an optimist, and it helped her during those years. Of course we attended church with my grandmother, and, as Mother tells it, when they sang that verse about "my mate and I," she completely lost it and headed to leave the sanctuary. She had lost her mate and the loss stabbed her heart.

As for me, years later, after fives tries at a reciprocal and healthy relationship with a partner, I was sure I had found my soulmate. I was almost fifty, and it was about time. We had lived parallel lives in many ways, intense little shy fat kids in high school who had bloomed into performing in later years, connoisseurs of the odd, adept at queer banter. We matched in terms of history, politics, and our discovery of recovery. Or so I thought.

After I left him, I heard that animal

Christmas carol and I remembered having listened to that dove verse right before I met him. I had been sobbing in the bathtub, broken with longing, wondering if I would ever love again (hence the term "bathos"???). Well, he did. Why did I leave? These things are never simply explained. From my point of view, I couldn't help noticing that our time together had shrunk from days on end to a couple of hours every few weeks. His life was not easy, and I didn't want to be a Mom or a dom so I let him be. So I had no choice, save a life of guaranteed resentment and all its little backdoor tricks.

You don't heal from a broken heart, especially if it's broken by your own hand. You question and requestion and you are not happy and move on and all that garbage. You just do the time and cultivate hope like a fragile violet. I had started going to a queer leftie church in Cambridge to help me mourn for my Dad's death. And now it was a safe place to mourn my relationship, since he wasn't there. Last Christmas, still sad, I made myself attend the children's play. It was about a spider and Jesus and yes, those same old animals. I had forgotten that song, since my mother and I had always fast forwarded it when we listened to Christmas tapes during my annual visit. "I said the dove from the rafters high..." Damn. It got me here, too. My tears just flowed—how embarrassing, how human—and I sniffled and dripped until my neighbor passed me the consoling sacred Kleenex. I wonder when I will be able to listen to that damn lovely song. 

Autumn Gender-Free Dance Camp

The Lavender Country & Folk Dancers invite you to their Autumn Gender-Free Dance Camp September 17-19 at Camp Circle Lodge in Sylvan Lake, New York. The camp offers opportunities to enjoy dance, song and music, and recreational activities. This camp will have contra dancing, Israeli folk dancing, and English country dancing. There are also workshops and a Saturday variety show and dance party. Visit www.lcfd.org/lcfd/camp or call 978-597-5861 for more information.

Fangirl from page 1

adoration of a young girl for the male rock star object of her devotion. I could write a book on this peculiar part of our culture and probably one day should. Still, the women didn't escape my fascination. Pictures of Olivia Newton-John and Natalie Cole ripped from Teen Beat and



Robin Renée and her band performing at The 5 Spot in Philadelphia.

other such mags made it to my walls. Later, I was hot for Pat Benatar, who just played at Cooper River Park (Pennsauken, NJ) on the 4th of July. Missed it. Damn.

The Benatar era is just about when classic rock and folk singers gave way to new wave and punk. Move over, Cat Stevens, here comes Romeo Void, The Sex Pistols, The Angry Samoans, and X-Ray Specs. I saw Elvis Costello on Saturday Night Live and it blew my mind. That show figures heavily in my story, since Bowie on SNL saved my life. One Christmastime when I was frighteningly depressed I saw him sing "Boys Keep Swinging" on television. He was gorgeous in a dress, brilliant and avant garde. I was inspired to keep on living. I love lots of music and have even seen James Taylor thirty-three times in concert, but Bowie is the #1 best overall rock star. Ever.

A few of my favorite fangirl moments:

1977: I cry ecstatically at the Andy Gibb concert after being nearly crushed by the crazy mob at the gate. *Six Flags, Jackson, NJ.*

1980: Barb and I win tickets to see Warren Zevon at Rutgers University, Camden, NJ.

1988: Front row, center for my favorite band DEVO, Mark Mothersbaugh sweats on me from the stage. Wow! *Club Bene, South Amboy, NJ.*

1992: I meet James Taylor for the first time. *92nd Street Y, New York, NY.*

1994: I meet Warren Zevon for the first time. *The Stone Pony, Asbury Park, NJ.*

2000: Zevon calls to say he likes my CD, "In Progress," and offers lots of thoughts and advice (Maybe one day I'll write The Zevon Files).

2002: FINALLY, I see Joan Armatrading in concert. *Sunoco Performance Theatre, Harrisburg, PA.*

2002: I meet Elvis Costello and Steve Nieve, introduced by my producer Scott Mathews, *Berkeley Community Theatre, Berkeley, CA.*

2003: I do my first phone interview as a freelance writer with Janis Ian.

2004: FINALLY, I see Gary Wilson in concert. *The Knitting Factory, New York, NY.*

2004: I talk with promoter Sid Bernstein; he tells me of how

George Harrison turned his Madison Square Garden dressing room into his own personal ashram.

Ah, the ashram thing. Rock 'n' roll will always be my passion. So is Indian chanting these days, now that I've become rather a born again Hindu-Pagan-Buddhist. Now I can get mad silly crushes on the people who sing the really great mantras. Some things never really change. My drive for music-and musicians-is still one big ball of art and worship and intellect and lust rolling through me daily.

Next week, I'm going to see DEVO in Central Park. As you see, I am true to my band. If I'm lucky, maybe I'll catch some sweat.

Robin Renée is a singer/songwriter and freelance writer whose current CD release is *All Six Senses*. Her work has appeared in *Curve Magazine*, *That Takes Ovaries!*, *Bold Females* and their *Brazen Acts* (Random House) and *Blessed Bi Spirit: Bisexual People of Faith* (Continuum Press). Her website is www.robinrenee.com.



Riffing on Music: A Manifesto

By Marcia Deihl

1. Music reaches deep, deeper than language, deeper than the right brain, the left brain, the corpus callosum that connects them. It slips into dreams, it tells us what we're feeling with awful old pop songs, it's unconscious, subconscious, and superconscious, even for self-labeled "non musicians." Everyone is a musician, we just get self-conscious after kindergarten if we're not encouraged.

2. Music is international, even interplanetary (remember the five tones of "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"?).

3. Music is healing, even beyond conscious efforts like Kay Gardner's amazing *Rainbow* album (i.e., the greatest lesbian lovemaking album of all time, for boys and girls), with its tones aimed at various chakras of the body. Music helps autistic children and stroke-stricken adults. Many people can sing but cannot talk.

4. If you are "blessed" with inner muzak, a song will come and then you will catch yourself singing it. Do not assume it is a deep, cosmic message. It could be what they were playing in the Star Market you just left. On the other hand, I often find out what my unconscious is "thinking." Let's face it, some days are "Good Day, Sunshine!" and other days are "People are Strange . . . When You're a Stranger."

5. Music is often genetic. My parents both had musical parents. Dad's played and taught and sang; Mother's just hummed hymns. But music filled the house in my young years. The first record (a 45, kids!) was "Walk Like a Man" by the Four Seasons. My mother changed it to "Walk like a man/Sing like girl . . ." (Mothers!)

6. I was not a physically attuned child (over-intellectual, overweight, and a bad athlete), but I was a very aural child. To this day I am swept up into the music playing in a store or a club to the extent that I sometimes don't even hear what people are saying. (No it's not just a volume thing.)

7. Cats don't sing. Some animals do.

8. I'm one that does. Thank Goddess.

9. You sing, too. That's an order, gals. It's empowering, cheaper than a gym, and good for your breathing. The shower has great acoustics. If you're bold, the open mics at Passim are every Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. Or check out "the List" (www.queeragenda.org) for cool gender queer open mics. ▼



Creating Change in St. Louis

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) is holding its 17th Annual Creating Change Conference in St. Louis, November 10-14 at the Millennium Hotel. The Creating Change Conference is designed for activists and organizers, board or staff members of GLBT organizations, elected officials, advocates for the GLBT community and all those who are working for social justice, freedom and equality in the world. For more information email creatingchange@thetaskforce.org or visit www.thetaskforce.org.

The annual BBWN Pre-Pride Brunch was a great success this year. After missing it last year, the community was so happy to have a place to gather and kick off the day together. Kudos to the volunteers (two at right) who made it all run smoothly. Thank you all!



And congrats to long-term BBWN members Megan and Carla (at left) who wore customized t-shirts proclaiming their new marriage: "illegal for 10 years; legal for 27 days."



BBWN Wants Your Used Books, CDs, VHS tapes, and DVDs!

Long-time member Gail Zacharias is helping BBWN with fundraising by listing used books, etc. on various online channels. 40% of the sale price will be donated to BBWN. If you have books to donate, please bring them to the BRC office, or contact Robyn (ochs@bi.org, 617-413-2717) to arrange for book transfer. The books must be in reasonably good shape—in particular, all pages must be present and readable (some highlighting and underlining is ok if it doesn't obscure the text), and the cover must be present and firmly attached to the pages (it's ok for the dust jacket of a hardcover to be missing). And the books mustn't be smelly (e.g. musty or smoky), since Gail will be storing them in her home!

THANKS THIS MONTH TO THE GENEROUS BOOK GIVERS BELOW:

Sandy Hall
& Peggy Gill

Letter to the Editor of *The Boston Globe* (sent May 20, 2004)

We are thrilled that same-sex couples now have the legal right to marry in Massachusetts. This momentous event is a civil rights achievement for all of us. Many people refer to this issue as "gay and lesbian marriage," but in fact not all people in same-sex couples are gay or lesbian—some of them are bisexual. Many bisexuals choose to commit to a lifelong partner of the same sex, but still acknowledge that they feel attractions toward more than one gender.

The legalization of same-sex marriage has a special meaning for those of who are bisexual: we no longer have to make the absurd distinction between being able to marry our partners if we happen to fall in love with a person whose sex is different from own own, but not if we happen to fall in love with a person of the same sex. We're happy to see the formal recognition of love and commitment regardless of gender. ▼

Lynn Rosenbaum
The Bisexual Resource Center

DNC Chair Claims Most Inclusive Democratic Convention in History

A week before the Democratic National Convention kicked off in Boston, Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe announced that there would be a new record of 236 members of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) delegation attending, which is the largest GLBT delegation in the history of political conventions.

"Our party's diversity is just one more reason why Democrats represent the real values of America," said DNC Chairman Terry

McAuliffe. "GLBT Americans are a vital part of our country, so it only stands to reason that they are a vital part of our convention. This year's Democratic Convention will be the most Gay (sic) inclusive convention in American History."

McAuliffe also noted that there would be the largest number of transgender delegates ever expected to attend the convention. Another historic first for a convention was when U.S. Representative Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin was named Vice Chair of the convention, becoming the first openly gay person to hold that post. The Democratic National Committee declared the convention the most diverse in the nation's history, with 40% of the delegates representing minority communities.

Millions of GLBT Americans will be watching the convention intently to see what kind of inclusive politics will be included in the party platform. By the time the next *BiWomen* comes out, the election will be right around the corner. Are you working in your community to get the vote out? Find out who is organizing in your neighborhood or town and get involved! ▼

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Visit BBWN online at:
biresource.org/bbwn
for a calendar listing of
local bisexual events.

CALENDAR *continued from page 16*

popular and centrally located so we're doing it again. Veggie Planet is located at 47 Palmer Street (at Club Passim) in Harvard Square, Cambridge. It's vegetarian food. T Stop is Harvard Square on the Red Line.

August 30 ♦ Monday

Mixed Gender Poly Support Group, 6:30-8:45 p.m. at Fenway Community Health, 7 Haviland St., Boston. This group is intended as a supportive environment to talk about poly-related issues in your life, to ask questions, or just to hear what other people have to say.

September 1 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-8:45 p.m. See August 4th.

September 7 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "We Are All Getting Older: Does that affect your sexuality and sexual identity?" Call the Women's Center for the topic for that night. Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807. See August 3rd.

September 8 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. See August 11th.

September 14 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. See August 10th.

September 16 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See August 4th.

September 17 ♦ Friday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "The Fiction Issue." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA, 02140 or e-mail to nellythrustmor@aol.com.

September 18 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch at Johnny D's in Somerville. A favorite brunch spot, Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square in Somerville always draws the biggest bi brunch crowd. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

September 20 ♦ Monday

Mixed Gender Poly Support Group, 6:30-8:45 p.m. at Fenway Community Health, 7 Haviland St., Boston. See August 30th.

September 21 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call the Women's Center for the topic for that night. See August 3rd.

September 23 ♦ Thursday

Celebrate Bisexuality Day!! The Bisexual Resource Center is sponsoring a local event, details were not complete by press time. Check at www.biresource.org for information.

September 26 ♦ Sunday

BBWN 5th Annual Book Swap Brunch

at Ellyn's in Somerville, Noon. Along with relaxing and chatting, we'll be looking over books others have brought to swap. You won't go away empty handed. (See sidebar on page 6 for more info on the brunch.) What's left over will go towards the BBWN book drive to raise money for the organization. Please bring the usual potluck dish and drinks to share. Contact Ellyn at nellythrustmor@aol.com or 617-623-5535.

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Enjoy delicious vegetarian food at Buddha's Delight in Boston's Chinatown. On Beach Street between Harrison and Washington. Nearest T stop is Chinatown on the Orange Line. It's on the original ground-floor location.

September 28 ♦ Tuesday

BiWomen mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Join us. Socialize during and after.



Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Saturdays: Dancing at Hollywood KTV, 41 Essex Street, Chinatown T, Boston. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. \$10 cover.

Sundays: Queer night, 9 p.m.-1a.m., the Milky Way, 403 Centre St, Jamaica Plain. DJ and dance floor.



SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for *BiWomen*
(sliding scale)

___ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)

___ \$20-\$30 (suggested)

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ADDRESS _____

BBWN, P.O. BOX 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Tuesdays:

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group. 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: 617-354-8807.

First Wednesdays, Third Thursdays:

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-9 p.m. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

CALENDAR

August 3 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m.

A discussion group for bisexual, bi-friendly, and questioning women. Call the Women's Center for the topic for that night. Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.



August 4 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-8:45 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

August 5-8 ♦ Thursday-Sunday

8th International Conference on Bisexuality takes place in Minneapolis, Minnesota. For any last minute information visit 8icb.org.

August 10 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. The group is facilitated by Denise who can be contacted at dpp1029@rcn.com. Call 617-354-8807 for directions.

August 11 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. All bi community members welcome to attend. New board members are needed. Stop by and see first-hand what it's all about. The meeting is on the 4th floor of the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

August 14 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Bike Ride

through the western suburbs. This is a 26-mile ride, gently rolling with three short hills. For those of you following along in your books, it's ride #23 in *Short Bike Rides: Eastern Massachusetts*



(except we're going to do it in reverse,

'cause Mike's a creature of habit). The route passes the DeCordova Museum, the Gropius House, and Drumlin Farm. Meet at 11:00 a.m. in the parking lot of the Double Tree Guest Suites at 550 Winter St. near First Ave. in Waltham, just off route 128 at exit 27 (Totten Pond Road). We'll try to be on the road no later than 11:20. Contact Mike at 617-625-7428 for more info. Also, please let Mike know if you have a car with bike rack, so he can arrange rides where possible.

August 17 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Call the Women's Center for the topic for that night. See August 3rd.

August 19 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See August 4th.

August 21 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Brunch will be at Doyle's at 3484 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain, between the Green Street and Forest Hills stops on the Orange Line. The number at Doyle's is 617-524-2345.

August 22 ♦ Sunday

BBWN BBQ at Stephanie's in Uxbridge (a little country retreat), Noon. Please bring something to grill or side dishes/beverages/desserts, etc. Contact Stephanie at sbaird@bikerider.com or call 617-359-6969 for directions and other questions. For those without cars, the commuter rail goes to Franklin and we can try to coordinate a pick up at the station. Get away from the city for the day and come relax with a bunch of bi babes as the summer draws to a close.

August 29 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1:00 p.m. Veggie Planet is

Judy Glick, M.Ed., LMHC
licensed psychotherapist for lesbians,
gays, and bisexuals

- Enhancing self-esteem
- Relationship and family issues
- Recovery from incest/abuse
- Depression and anxiety
- Coming out
- Transitions and career change

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Couples & Individuals
Sliding Scale/Insurance
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CALENDAR continues on page 15

A Fairy Tale, Part One

By Debbie Block-Schwenk

The biggest problem with falling for a comic book writer is that everything becomes larger than life.

I buy her presents—and watch her transform them. The incense burner becomes an ancient Egyptian artifact unleashing the power of the goddess Bast upon any unsuspecting woman who lights it. The blue glass flower—hand blown, bought at a crafts fair—becomes the lost component of an alien spaceship that must be replaced in the engine and the ship steered to the proper docking station in another galaxy before it falls into the wrong hands.

Even the cards I send her—to me it's an auburn-haired dancer, feet swirling against a geometrically patterned rug. To her, it's a girl transformed by visions into a goddess of mathematics, unleashing order and fiscal responsibility upon an unsuspecting populace.

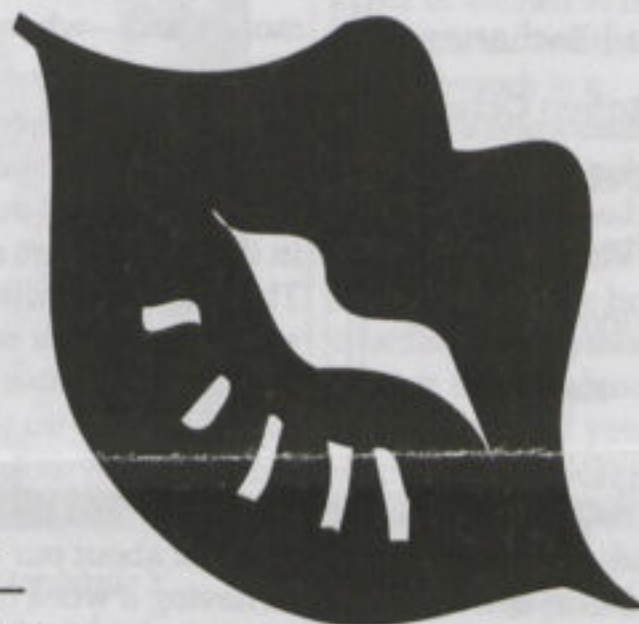
Her creativity is awe-inspiring. But there's always a high priestess or a superhero at the café table with us, sipping a latte. Without mutant powers or an invisible airplane, or surreal dreams in which I converse with mythic figures, I'm unable to reach past them and take her hand.

She doesn't yet see that there's more to me inside. That I'm like the dusty kettle sitting in the store room of the antique shop for years and years, until the right person comes in and smooths on the polish, rubs the right way, murmurs the incantation passed down through generations of family lore—and releases the genie.

So I toss and turn at night, not remembering my dreams. I pace on the bus, getting strange looks from the other passengers. I clench my teeth at work, trapped in my cubicle like it's a glass coffin.

That's it! I'll tell her I'm under a powerful curse, an evil spell that holds me down like chains and shackles. My dreams are full of wonders, but I wake up and have to change the cat litter. I could fly the bus to Mars, but I have a meeting. There's always another deadline, another chore, another manifestation of this curse which only she can break.

Which only she can break —
with a kiss. ▼



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Volunteers of the Month

Gail Zacharias

Robyn Ochs

Deb Morley

Stephanie B.

Wayne Bryant

Katrina

Elena

Valerie Brown

Debbie Block-
Schwenk

Alice Liebowitz

Steph Miserlis

And many more
fabulous people!
You know who
you are!

BiWomen is published bi-
monthly.

Editor:

Ellyn Ruthstrom

Printed on
recycled paper

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

Word Processing

As a writer and editor, words are a big part of my life—sometimes too big. I have a day job where I write and edit, I edit and write for this newsletter every other month, and—when I have some spare time and energy—I fancy myself as a creative writer as well. That's a lot of words being processed on a regular basis.

But, I didn't do what three brave souls did in this issue: share my fiction with you. Thanks to the writers who did submit their work. I hope you enjoy their stories.

I started musing about what words and fiction have to do with bisexuality for me. For many of us, it took us a while to find the word "bisexual" and then to relate it to how we thought about our own identity. That moment of having a word to hold on to is very liberating. Often, however, we end up having to define what is a bisexual story or character for ourselves because the mainstream tends not to want to label it as such.

Reading stories of bisexual lives also brings you more insight in our own lives and we thirst for representation, in fiction particularly. Some of my own favorite books over the years with bi characters are *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, *The Hours*, by Michael Cunningham, *Aquamarine* by Carol Anshaw, *Seeing Dell* by Carol Guess, and Amy Bloom short stories.

For me, what stands out about these books is the way the writers take the bisexuality of their characters for granted. They are who they are, they love who they love, and the stories have depth and complexities like any other great writing.

Let me encourage all of you to share some of your own personal stories about being bi in our next issue on "Biways: Your Life and Loves." From first revelation to first love to first heartbreak. Was it in first grade that you knew? Did it come to you in a dream? Or did it smack you on the head on your 40th birthday? Where have you been on your path to here?

Ellyn Ruthstrom

Next in BiWomen

The *BiWomen* theme for
August/September is:

Biways: Your Life and Loves

How would you tell your own personal story about your bi identity? Have you always known? Was it an awakening? A turning point? A complete surprise? Tell us your tale. This theme is inspired by storyteller Annie Goglia's writing workshop.

Deadline: November 19, 2004

Future Issues

February/March

Up For Grabs: The Editor Will
Accept Bribes

Send your suggestions for future topics to
nellythrustmor@aol.com

Please Submit to
BiWomen!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,
black-and-white art, news, and views to:

BiWomen

P.O. Box 400639

Cambridge, MA 02140

or via e-mail to

NellyThrustmor@aol.com

If you do not want your name
published, please tell us.

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this newsletter are copyrighted
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Why are these women smiling? Because they all had a wonderful time at Stephanie's brunch in Uxbridge in August. See the sidebar at right to see how you can be a host.

Brunch Coordinator Wants You to Host!

BBWN potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area. We try to hold a brunch in a member's home each month so that people can relax and share food and experiences in a safe space. Deb Morley is the brunch coordinator, so please contact her at debmo345@comcast.net if you are interested in hosting a brunch. Thanks Deb for volunteering! See the calendar on pages 11-12 for upcoming brunches.

International Bi Conference Visits Minneapolis

By Ellyn Ruthstrom

Every two years the international bi community finds a place to hold its international conference and this year it was held in lovely Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was a really wonderful place to hold it, even though I imagine the low attendance (especially from outside the U.S.) might have been due to it not being on a more populous coast. As a participant, (sorry, didn't volunteer to do much of anything this time) my brief synopsis of the conference would be that the facilities were wonderful, the plenaries ran smoothly, the workshops were varied and interesting, and the social/entertainment events were great mixing opportunities. I met some amazing people from around the world who I really hope to meet again out and about.

Opening night the audience learned about some Minneapolis/St. Paul bi history as local bi activist/radio star Marge Charmoli shared some happenings of the past and envisioned where our community was headed in the twenty-first century.

On Friday, Matt Foreman, the Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (now wanting to be referred to more

inclusively as The Task Force), met with interested activists for an open discussion. Certainly one of the main topics was the huge error of The Task Force two years ago when they released a report on the census material that dealt with same-sex couples. The language used in the report was inconsistent and too often excluded bi people within those couples.

Credit was given to The Task Force, however, for standing behind Margaret Cho when she was "uninvited" to the GLBT delegate party at the Democratic National Convention because she had said some things the DNCC found too controversial. The Task Force then pulled its sponsorship of the event.

It was definitely a good sign that Foreman and a national board member took the time to be at the conference and respond to the group's concerns. Keeping national organizations aware of our community's work and perspective is an ongoing project.

After a full day of workshops, Friday's plenary included Japanese trans activist Makoto



Top: Hilde from The Netherlands and Toni from Seattle celebrate at the dinner/dance.

Bottom: The Task Force's Matt Foreman (man in the tie) meeting with bi activists from around the country.



Photos by Ellyn Ruthstrom

ICB continues on page 10

Would you like to dance?

Are you looking for a dance class where you can feel comfortable as an out bi woman? OUT to Dance warmly welcomes folks of any age, race, sexual orientation, body size, or level of dance ability. GLBT classes taught by Liz Nania will be held on Sunday nights (already started on September 19) at West Roxbury School of Dance, 29 Corey St in W. Roxbury through November 21. Salsa/Merengue 1 is at 6 p.m.; Ballroom 1 is at 7 p.m.; and West Coast Swing is at 8 p.m. For info or directions call Liz at 617-363-0029 or e-mail liz@outtodance.com or check out www.OUTtoDance.com.

Eva's Story

By Alice Liebowitz

That's not very nice," I told myself as I called the young man tailgating me a bastard. "He doesn't deserve that name just for driving too close, not paying attention."

Someone else deserved that name, though. Well, maybe not "bastard," per se. They can't seem to come up with a non gender-specific word for that kind of person. There were words for everything Eva had been to me before: beauty, acquaintance, lover. "Oh my!" I sighed, confused.



My eyes did hurt, though, from the tailgater's headlights. Angry, I entertained the notion of slowing down to 15 miles

per hour for a while. But if the young man had a violent side that would be sure to bring it out. I didn't need to be rear-ended.

"Displacement," I reminded myself. "It's a defense mechanism. You feel wounded by Eva and you don't know how to retaliate, so when these headlights come along and shine in your eyes, you get all vindictive. It's so transparent. Freud would laugh."

I ignored the rearview mirror and concentrated on the road ahead of me. It was nearly dark, but my mind hadn't yet adjusted to a black road/white lines view of the world. Feeling blind at this time of night, I always worried that I'd swerve into oncoming traffic. Not that there was any tonight.

I had almost completely emptied my consciousness of everything but a dusky, dark-blue picture of the world ahead of me, when Eva's blue eyes—almost the same shade of blue—began twinkling in front of my face. Her eyes... and the bridge of her nose... and some of the freckles on her prominent cheekbones.

"Tears and driving don't mix," I said out loud and blinked really fast.

So I drove. I yawned and rolled down the window. Time passed. I yawned again. Oh well. The drive really wouldn't be so bad if I had planned on making it tonight. It's not that I necessarily *expected* to be invited to stay the night after the party, but I had certainly hoped... The fact is, I hadn't let myself think about what I would do if I didn't get invited to stay the night. Because that would have meant not only thinking about driving home alone, but also admitting the possibility that Eva

might not want to spend a night with me—that she might not even care about seeing me at all.

But I had thought when she invited me to the party that maybe it meant she wanted me back. Why did I think that? *Why* did I think that? There was no reason to think that. I bit down hard on my teeth. Ouch.

It was definitely dark out now. The tailgater's headlights were still shining straight into my eyes, but I didn't even care. I wondered vaguely when the road was going to split into two lanes. Maybe he'll just pass me illegally in a left-turning lane. That would be nice.

I wrinkled my forehead to shake off some tiredness.

Funny to be feeling all this stuff. When I first got in the car, all I felt was glazed. *Uh... guess I'll be going home now. Uh... guess I don't exactly know what just happened. Well, here's my car. Well. Yes.*

"Oh, hi, Margaret," she had said in that salesclerk tone of voice of hers. I had heard that voice before. She spoke that way once to an annoying acquaintance on the street and once to her mother on the phone when she was angry. "So you came. I see you've had your hair cut."

And that was it. She turned away and chatted vivaciously with her other guests.

"God damn it, I thought you loved me!" I shouted into the stale air of my car. Then, quieter, "Or I hoped you did. Or at least cared about me or something."

She never had actually said she loved me. In fact, one time during sex I told her I loved her, and she almost laughed. "You're so cute, Maggie," she'd said. Paralyzing, it was. I still feel paralyzed when I think back on it. But I tried not to worry about it at the time. I just made sure never to tell her directly again.

My name is really Margaret. Eva called me Maggie from day one. When I told my mother about it, she said it didn't suit me. She's right, of course. I'm not nearly that cute.

"If a woman calls you by a nickname, that means she really likes you." That's what I would say to myself. Did I really think that? Well yes, I guess I really do remember thinking that. But it's not completely stupid to think that, is it? It seems like it should be true. Maybe it's just not true when it comes to beautiful redheads named Eva.

Maybe nothing's true. Aren't there philosophers that believe that all reality is relative? What are they called? Epistemologists? Existentialists?

Who cares? I interrupted myself.

Mental image of Eva in that white dress with dark blue embroidery serving fucking shrimp hors d'oeuvres to guests. At her sister's

party, earlier today. Avoiding my gaze so calmly, so smoothly, it was barely even impolite. An observer, even a good one, would guess she didn't realize I was there, five feet away, right under her nose.

"I've been so busy," she had scrawled on the bottom of the invitation. "Looking forward to seeing you."

So up I went.

It would have been a dismal party anyway, even without Eva acting like that. A stiff, formal garden party with fifty stiff, formal strangers. Besides that, it was awkward. Everyone else was there for a reason; I was there to see Eva.

Oh look, it's that pet store again. I passed it on the way up. Not that much further to go, I guess. An hour, hour and a half, maybe. I stared for a second at the sign with the big blue neon fish and the green neon words, "Terry's Pet Shop." It looks different at night.

So what was I thinking as I drove by here this morning? *Eva!* Intense uncertainty, breathless hope.

That was just a brief commercial stretch. Then I was back out in the country again. It was really dark now, and you could see a lot of stars through the trees. It looked like a clear, cold night, but it wasn't that cold.

Hungry. I felt my stomach relax and realized I was hungry. I hadn't noticed that it was clenched so tightly. It was calm now, but sore from being tensed up so long.

Hmm, I looked at my watch. I'd been on the road about two hours. That makes sense. A one o'clock garden party to end at five o'clock. *What the hell?* Why did she have me drive three hours to go to a dumb party where I didn't know anyone, if she didn't plan on inviting me to stay the night? In the guestroom, at least.

Lois wasn't even there.

How bizarre to realize that I've known Eva's cousin Lois longer than I've known Eva. Lois and I worked in an office together five or six years ago, and now we work in adjacent buildings. Sometimes we get together for lunch. Yeah, I guess we've known each other a long time.

"All the time I've known you," I imagined saying to her, "how come you never told me

you had a gorgeous cousin who liked women?"

For a second, I wished I could have met Eva when I was 25. Imagine, six years together! But of course not. If I had fallen in love with Eva when I was 25, she would have dumped me when I was 25. It would have been the same story.

Anyway, Lois wouldn't have introduced me to her cousin before because Eva lived a good three-hour drive away in a house with her sister. That house that I had finally gotten to see today. Eva had talked about the house just enough to make me curious about it. Funny, I always imagined that seeing the house would be a pleasant experience, cozy even, and intimate.

I can see myself sitting at my desk on that ordinary Thursday, not knowing I was about to meet Eva. Lois stopped by my desk and asked if I wanted to go for lunch. "This is my cousin Eva," she said, "She's visiting from out of town."

I looked up to say hello, but those eyes! I was flabbergasted. The most beautiful blue eyes were looking at me, penetrating, wide and bright, welcoming, and suggestive, all at the same time. Looking at *me*, of all people. A mousy 31-year-old typist sitting at her desk.

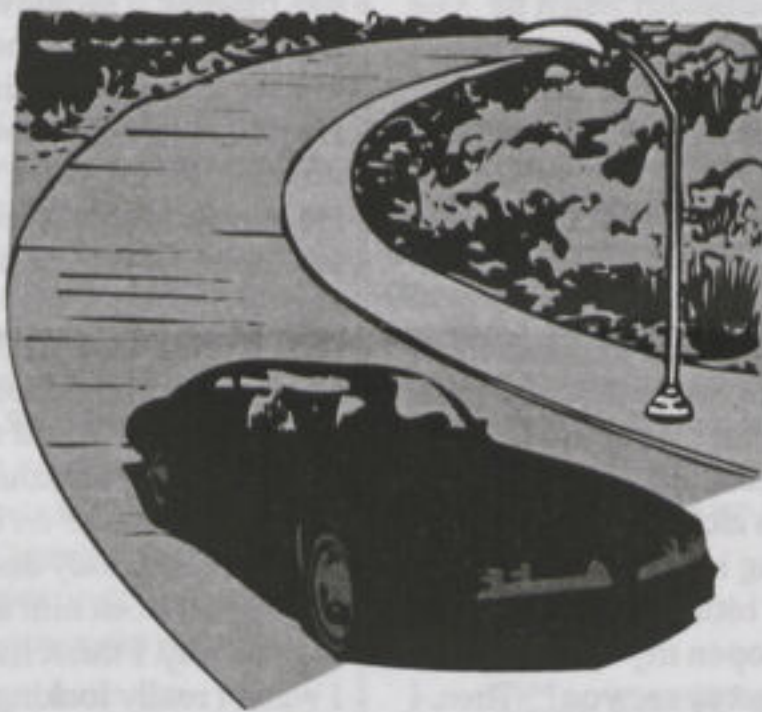
In case you had not guessed, I'm not the type to attract a great deal of romantic attention. Before Eva, I hadn't dated in... well, I'm not sure I want to count the years. Let's just say that beautiful women flashing their eyes at me have never been an everyday occurrence.

After that lunch, what happened? She invited me out to dinner, then to an outdoor concert, and then... "There's nothing in your lease that says you can't have a roommate, is there?" she asked casually.

I must have gasped. Stuttering, I said something like, "You—you mean you want to move in with me?" I don't remember exactly

what I said; I was in a daze. I do remember that when I looked up at her for an answer, she was staring at me quietly, with a calm, confident smile. I realized she had been staring at me that way since the beginning of the conversation.

Eva's continues on page 8



Seeking Writing on Queer Youth Cultures

Submissions are being sought for an interdisciplinary collection on queer youth cultures. Topics can be from the everyday worlds of queer youth self-representation and community involvement to spectacular displays of performative transgression. The goal is to challenge generalizing images of youth through representations and analysis of queer youth cultures. Reflexive forms of writing are also encouraged as a way to question and bridge relations between youth and researchers. Creative visual artwork, comics, and photography will also be considered as an important element to enhance the field of queer youth cultural representation. Topics could include: grrrl bands, transgender youth, online identities and networks, community/festival organizing, grassroots activism, performance cultures such as drag kings, burlesque and spoken word and more. Please send a 500-word abstract as an email attachment in Word along with a brief C.V. or bio to both editors by November 1, 2004. For further information, contact Susan Driver sdriver@wlu.ca or Mocha Jean Herrup herrup@austincc.edu.

No Shopping on October 8

Ever wonder how much money GLBT people pump into the American economy each day? Well, Boycott for Equality wants to find out and is encouraging all GLBT people to not spend money on Friday, October 8. Boycott for Equality Day is being endorsed by many state and national queer organizations. Margaret Cho's web site, www.loveisloveislove.com, has listed Boycott For Equality Day as one of the "12 Things You Can Do" to promote queer equality. Boycott For Equality is an Atlanta-based non-profit formed to promote the Boycott. For that day, GLBT Americans are encouraged to withdraw from the economy in three specific areas: 1) Do not purchase anything. Do not generate sales tax or business revenue; 2) Don't work. Take the day off-do not generate payroll taxes, income taxes or add to the economy; and 3) Do not use cell phones. Dropping out of the communication network is a way to measure the impact of your presence. For more information, visit www.boycottforequality.org or contact Dale Duncan at 757-257-6215 or dsd@boycottforequality.org.

Pepsi Sex

By Valerie Brown

Have I ever told you how beautiful you are?" His tongue is sweet and slick on the crook of my neck. The movie plays on, muting the voices of his roommate in the next room, with her date. Soft wet licks move down across my shoulder, then up and up, almost touching my ears, but not yet. A train rumbles on toward somewhere, trembling in the floor beneath us. He kisses along my jawbone, then, to my mouth. An empty pizza box lays open on the table, just beside the new box of Trojans. Good thing her date thought to bring them. He feels the fullness of my lips, then parts them, playing with my teeth and tongue. I taste Pepsi, mixed with him.

"Is that okay?" I can only manage a breathy giggle, then, I bite my lip and smile and sigh. One of my photographs hangs behind his head, next to a door leading out onto a landing. His smile is crooked and sexy. His lips are wet and sexy. He licks them often, and now. His eyes are on mine—inside mine. I smell Pepsi on his breath when he exhales. His roommate sighs and moans in the next room. She giggles sexily, then, her date laughs. I can hear the slap of skin against skin from the next room.

"Tell me when." "Okay." I don't recognize my own voice. "Turn over." His fingers are on me, stroking my hair, then down my neck to my chest. He pauses to massage and kiss them through my T-shirt. I arch my back to aid him. My T-shirt is gone now, but his mouth is so fine...I look down to watch him. He bites, and I tense. He drags his teeth along the skin. The bedsprings are squeaking in the next room, and I think the headboard is hitting the wall.

"What's wrong?" I open my eyes and see his hesitation. "Don't I get to see you?" Then, I rub his bare stomach, and pull him close for a kiss. I shiver for some reason.

"Do you want to go in there?" He pulls me up from the floor, and walks me to his room, while kissing me and massaging my body.

"I'm not rushing you, am I?" I shake my head, dizzy with passion, and the thought of everything that might happen. The door is shut and the knob presses into the small of my back.

"Oh, yes. Right there." His free hand opens it and we stumble back into the room. My hip catches the edge of his dresser, knocking an empty Pepsi bottle to the floor. I pull away from it, and him.

"I'm sorry. I must have gotten a little carried away." He gives me that hopeless puppy dog look that I love. I rub my hip and avoid meeting his eyes. He brushes hair from my face, then, kisses my temples. *Just like that. Right there.* I kiss his nose and eyelids. *Don't stop.* He pulls me tightly to him, and my breasts press into his chest. His stomach is hot against mine, and I can feel the rhythm of his breathing in my ribs. My hips grind into his and his into mine. *Please don't stop.*

"You are so sexy." He pulls my sweats down, baring my thighs and my satin thong. I feel his mouth on my chest, kissing a path along the lace of my bra. *Oh, yes! God! Don't stop.* Then he licks all the way back to where he

began. The clasp is undone and the lace falls to the floor, near the fallen Pepsi bottle. My self-consciousness draws a hand up to cover my bared body. *Faster! Harder!*

"Do you want to stop?" He tries to pull my attention back to him and away from looking down at the

floor at my sock-clad feet. "Will you look at me, please?" I swallow and shiver in the sudden coolness of the room. "We don't have to keep going. We'll finish the movie. Okay?" He pauses for an answer. I know he wants to do this. "I'll get you a drink, so you can dress." He leaves. I can't keep doing this. I've pull the sweatpants over my hips and my curves almost disappear in the mirror on his closet. I rub my bare stomach. I still have stretch marks from all the weight loss, but it has been so long. Why is this still so hard for me? My T-shirt is still on the couch. I am tying my hair back as he knocks on the open door.

"Is everybody decent?" "Almost," I reply edging between him and the doorframe into the hallway. I think he was holding a Pepsi, but I wasn't really looking at him.

"I am really sorry. I didn't mean for that to happen. I thought you wanted to so..." He stops. The arc of my back disappears beneath the oversized T-shirt. It hangs loosely over my body. He hands me the Pepsi. "I rewound it to where we stopped watching." I know he is trying to meet my gaze, but I am dizzy and nauseous. I know he is licking his lips, then he'll scratch his eyebrow. I can hear him sigh.

"He pulls me tightly to him, and my breasts press into his chest. His stomach is hot against mine, and I can feel the rhythm of his breathing in my ribs."

His roommate and her date are finishing up in the next room.

"I'm sorry. I thought I could, but..." I don't know what happened. I look at him. He doesn't know either. "It isn't your fault." We take our places on the couch. I grab a cushion to cover my lap. "We should wait for them. They'll probably be out in a minute." "Yeah. Okay." I go to the window. The lot glows orange in the light of the streetlamps. The pool is covered, signaling the coming of winter. I shiver for some reason.

"Do you want a blanket?" I didn't think he was watching me. "Or I can turn up the heat." "No. I am okay. I-I'm fine." A cat hops up onto the balcony below. She looks up, then out into the street. "You still see a fat girl, don't you?" The cat glances from me, then out to the street again. The door squeaks as his roommate and her date come out from the next room. I've always heard that people glow after sex, but I wouldn't know. They seemed warm to me. Her date was zipping his fly; she was buttoning her top.

"Did you guys want to finish the movie?" The roommate's date ignores the question, apparently hunting for something. "He has to go, but I'll watch it with you." Her date isn't looking at her. There is no cuddling, or kissing. He picks up his keys from the counter then leaves, slamming the door a bit harder than needed. My photograph shifts on the wall. She flops down on the couch. The room smells like sex.

"I don't think I'm in the mood." I get my jacket and shoes. I know their eyes are on me, and I want to stay, but I don't know. A crisp wind encourages me to zip my jacket on the landing. The cat is on the railing, looking at me. I walk up to her and she doesn't run. She looks peach in the late night lighting. I hold out my hand, letting her smell me. She isn't wearing a collar. I've never figured out how she could get it off.

"We'll need to get you a new collar in the morning, Echo." She lets me pet her; her fur is smooth and slick between my fingers. I can feel her purring against my hand.

"Will you call me?" He is standing surprisingly close. I didn't hear him come out. "I don't know. I have studying to do, and I'm working all weekend. Maybe next week." He is giving me that hopeless puppy dog look, and it is making me feel queasy. Echo bats my hand with her paw; I must've stopped petting her. I want to run. "Okay. I'll talk to you later, then." He takes a step back toward his apartment. "Yeah. Later." He sighs and licks his lips and I turn away.

"Please call." I pick up Echo, and descend the stairs to the parking lot below. I don't want to look back. I know he isn't inside yet. I try to look confident on my way to my own apartment. Echo squirms in my arms, and I let her go. I head up the stairs in the opposite building, still feeling his touch, still smelling the Pepsi. ▽

Support Equal Marriage Fight

Next time you are on the Internet, check out the web site SupportEquality.org. On that site you can find out how to make a donation to help protect equal marriage rights in Massachusetts. A group of Massachusetts' residents have identified legislative candidates who support same-sex marriage rights and who most need financial support. Electing friendly legislators is the key to defeating an amendment to the Massachusetts constitution to take away the right for same-sex couples to marry. The amendment squeaked through by just five votes this spring. If we don't stop the amendment in the legislature next year it will be put on the ballot in 2006. And remember that those who oppose equal marriage are organizing through conservative churches and putting a lot of money into the effort to oppose same-sex marriage. Those who care about our marriage rights are invited to visit SupportEquality.org and donate as much as they can to these worthy candidates. Remember: even a small donation can make a difference.

Annie Goglia's Picks for Bi Women Readers!

Virago Modern Classics publishes some women writers from the past who haven't made it into the hallowed canon of western literature. Some of them have lesbian or bi content. One I enjoyed was *Summer Will Show* by Sylvia Townsend Warner. Written in the 1930s, it takes place in the mid-1800s, in England and then France. A married English woman goes to Paris to find her husband and gets involved with his mistress. Wowza! The excitement of French Revolution and a blossoming lesbian relationship in one book! What more could you ask for!

If you like feminist science fiction, I highly recommend the series put out by The Women's Press. My collection includes Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (a classic!!!) and *We Who are About to....* Joanna Russ is edgy, funny, angry and brilliant. I also have Josephine Saxton's *The Travails of Jane Saint* and *Queen of the States*, Jane Palmer's *The Planet Dweller* and Lorna Mitchell's *The Revolution of Saint Jone*.

All intelligent, interesting and not-your-typical sci-fi.

If you're looking for a sweet teen lesbian coming out story, check out my friend Sophie Glasser's young adult novel, *I've Known Since I was Eight*, published by Universe, Inc., 2003. Great to see a book showing a teen girl grappling with homophobia, her first relationship with a girl, and realizing the power of allies—and she ends up feeling good about herself! ▽

Visit BBWN online at:
biresource.org/bbwn
for a calendar listing of
local bisexual events.

Socially DeviART Wants You

Philadelphia will be the site of a two-day event that will celebrate art that does not follow the rules on January 8-9, 2005. From visual arts to culinary arts to the performing arts, Socially DeviART will highlight art beyond the norm. The organizers are seeking artists and performers so contact Zara Iris Pedisich at bugthebug13@comcast.net. Volunteers to help behind the scenes at the event are also being sought.

CD Review

Girlyman, *Remember Who I Am*,
Daemon Records, 2004

Reviewed by Ellyn Ruthstrom

Forget Ah-nald Schwarznegger and his stupid "girlyman" jokes, the real Girlyman has much more useful things to say and they sound much more harmonious while saying it.

After recently receiving a review CD of this trio, I ventured over to Passim's to see them in living color. Girlyman gave a great show and their voices blended even better in person. Girlyman is Doris Muramatsu, Nate Borofsky, and Ty Greenstein and the three have been performing together for about three years now. Doris and Ty used to have their own group called The Garden Verge. All three identify as queer and rumor has it Nate has been a bi woman at one point or another. The group name is obviously fun to play with and they readily admit to "annoyance with traditional gender roles." Sounds like my kind of people.

What do they sound like? The type of songs range from folk to pop to some of what

they nicknamed "girlygrass" (as opposed to bluegrass). They are all very versatile musicians and take turns on the guitar, banjo, djembe, and mandolin. I especially like the mandolin on some of the songs, it's not a sound you hear a lot of and they use it well. Each of the three artists has a beautiful voice but when they harmonize they knock your socks off.

"Viola" is the first song on *Remember Who I Am*. You wouldn't think Viola was a name that you would take to singing, but after hearing this song I challenge anyone to get it out of their head. It also has a great bi sensibility to it, with both the female and male vocals bemoaning the loss of Viola.

"Say Goodbye" is probably my favorite with Doris's lead vocal and Ty's lead on "The Shape I Found You In" was haunting in the live version, a little less so on the CD. Ty also shines on "David" and the mandolin solo on this is fabulous. Nate's voice breaks out on a few of the more bouncy numbers like "Fall Stories" and "Postcards From Mexico." And I love their cover of George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord."

This is a very talented trio that I personally want to become a groupie for. Check out the CD for a taste of their sound, but definitely try to see them in person if they hit your local venue. They are girlylicious. ▽

Eva's from page 5

She probably hadn't blinked. There she was, with that quiet, confident stare. After a bit, she smiled generously, lightly, and said, "You're so cute, Maggie."

And that was that.

The months that followed were like nothing I've ever lived. Coming home to Eva sprawled on the couch with grapes to share, Eva teaching me to dance, Eva taking me on midnight picnics and day trips to New York City. Impassioned discussions on almost every topic, where Eva would spar with an imaginary opponent, because I hardly said a word. Feeling so acutely alive.

And then one day she was gone. I came home to a message on the answering machine. "I've gone to my sister's. I'll keep you posted."

Why did she notice me to begin with? I wouldn't think I would be her type. Just look at that very professional-looking, elegant blonde woman I saw her with today, what's-her-name.

Actually, I do remember her name. *Sigh*. Yes, I do.

Eva introduced us. "Joan, have you met Margaret? We used to be roommates." (*Roommates?*) "And this is my cousin Phyllis..." They

walked right by me. I don't know for sure if my mouth was hanging open, but I definitely stared at Eva as she passed. I think she saw me, in the corner of her eye.

Oh my god. Oh my god, how humiliating! *She doesn't love me, she doesn't love me, she doesn't love me, she doesn't love me!* Ouch.

I winced and closed my eyes hard. Whoops, I'd better watch the road.

And a fine road it is. Up a hill, down a hill. Not many houses out here. A few, though. Big old New England farm houses set back from the road.

On I drove. And on and on.

I turned right onto a residential back road not far from my house. On the corner, there's a big white house with a big picture window that looks onto the street. Tonight a young couple was in the dining room, finishing a late dinner. The chandelier was lit, the table was decorated gaily, the two of them were smiling at each other and laughing. I wanted to steal some of their happiness. I wanted to smash the window and grab their crystal wineglasses. I wanted to cry. I was crying.

Monday morning, I woke up with the alarm at 6:10, drank my coffee with two sugars and went to work. ▽

Book Reviews

Swinging on the Garden Gate: A Spiritual Memoir, by Elizabeth J. Andrew

Reviewed by Nicole Kirby

"There was a time when I was not yet out of the closet when I'd stand for hours scanning the bookstore shelves for a book that dealt honestly with both sexuality and spirituality, that might reconcile the experience of being bisexual with the Christian faith. If I could find this book, I was convinced, I'd be less lonely and more confident of my sanity. It would be my companion during difficult times. Another person's coming out story could be my map so I wouldn't wander in the dark. With complete, unrelenting desire, I ached for this book. There was no such book. The gap on the bookshelves gave me a mandate: Walk into your longing. Write this book."

The above quote is printed on the back cover of Elizabeth Andrew's book and it really does describe what she was trying to do. There are many books out now about being a gay or lesbian Christian, but still only a handful of books about being a bisexual Christian, and even fewer with their spiritual journeys.

Andrew's book came at a time in my life when I was beginning to express myself in more spiritual ways. I was attending church and asking hard questions of my self about God, about who I was, and where I was heading in life. I was given a copy of this book by my university chaplain, and went back to my dorm room, and proceeded to devour the words in a matter of hours. I was so excited to be holding and listening to someone else's story that mapped so closely to my own at times. It was like she knew what I had needed and she told me all she knew.

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Andrew writes about her life with such integrity and honesty. She doesn't just tell you her journey, she brings you on that journey with her. Her emotions shift from the page and assemble within the reader. When she feels fear, sadness, joy, peace, wonder and uncertainty, you feel them with her. As she begins to progress fully into her own sense of self you are right along side her in that transition.

Swinging on the Garden Gate is one of those books that doesn't leave you waiting for an answer. Andrew gives you her story with richness and texture so that what you are left with is the reality and power of her journey. ▽

Word. On Being a {Woman} Writer, edited by Jocelyn Burrell, The Feminist Press, 2004

Reviewed by Ellyn Ruthstrom

If you are a writer, this collection of essays by an array of amazingly talented writers is a great book to dip into for inspiration. If you're not a writer, but still a lover of wordsmithing, the book will certainly interest you in discovering how these various women craft their art. I applaud Burrell's success at pulling together writers from around the world and across the spectrum of genres.

Ritu Menon describes how gender acts as its own form of censorship in her country of India. Even if a woman finds access to education, there are simply many things she must not write about or in particular ways. She notes, "The attempt on the part of those who censor is not to prevent others from reading what we write, but to prevent us from writing or speaking in the first place."

Even though I had read it before, I was newly struck by June Jordan's piece "The Difficult Miracle of Black Poetry in America or Something Like a Sonnet for Phillis Wheatley." I miss Jordan's blend of wit and politics and just damn good prose.

Jennifer DiMarco's "Word Warrior" describes how having a blank journal to fill enabled her to survive and thrive despite horrendous sexual abuse in her childhood. In fact, she embraces her experience and writes, "I would never change anything about my life. My life has made me who I am today. I was raised to survive. And I will."

These are just a few to five special mention to. Also in the collection are works by some very well-known writers like Joy Harjo, Sandra Cisneros, Barbara Kingsolver, Edwidge Danticat, Margaret Atwood, bell hooks, and Jeannette Winterson. Each selection in the anthology has a strong voice and attests to the power of women's words. ▽

Online Research Survey

A doctoral graduate student is seeking participants in an online research study on female bisexual mixed couple relationships, meaning that one partner is a bi woman and the other partner is lesbian. If you are 18 or older, self-identify as bisexual, have been in or are currently in a mixed couple relationship, and have disclosed your bisexual identity to your lesbian partner after the start of your relationship, you may be interested in being a part of this survey. Participation is confidential and will include an informed consent form, a demographic questionnaire, a research questionnaire/rating scale and a series of nine research questions. Interested? Log on to www.WebResearchInfo.com. If you have any questions, you can contact Elayne Vallassopoulos at elayne@focusedwebdesign.com or 925-451-0860.

BBWN Wants Your Used Books, CDs, VHS tapes, and DVDs!

Long-time member Gail Zacharias is helping BBWN with fundraising by listing used books, etc. on various online channels. 40% of the sale price will be donated to BBWN. If you have books to donate, please bring them to the BRC office, or contact Robyn (ochs@bi.org, 617-413-2717) to arrange for book transfer. The books must be in reasonably good shape—in particular, all pages must be present and readable (some highlighting and underlining is ok if it doesn't obscure the text), and the cover must be present and firmly attached to the pages (it's ok for the dust jacket of a hardcover to be missing). And the books mustn't be smelly (e.g. musty or smoky), since Gail will be storing them in her home!

THANKS THIS MONTH TO THE GENEROUS BOOK GIVERS BELOW:

Gina Siesing
& Dawn Dreisbach

Boundless: A Women's and Trans Event Series at Fenway Community Health

By Julie Ebin

Last year I was privileged to be able to start an event series for bi women, lesbians, and trans folks. The first event was a talk and discussion led by Robyn Ochs called "Bisexuality, Feminism, Heterosexual Privilege, and Our Bodies." It was really well attended, drawing over 50 people.

Working on the series was an amazing experience for me. I got to collaborate with some wonderful people, such as Robyn, Joyce Collier, a lawyer who presented a talk on the legal issues relating to same sex marriage, Amie Evans and Toni Amato, who did a workshop on flirting skills (I kid you not!), as well as Diego Sanchez and Scout, here at Fenway, who were part of a panel on how/why to come out to your doctor. I also got to direct what we would focus on and who we would include. This was a real privilege as I got to make sure that the series would not only be bi-inclusive, but would also feature a topic of interest to bi women.

This year's series is about to start up, and we have a new name—*Boundless*. The series will feature four events: 1) "Forever Young? Lesbians, Bi Women, and Trans Folks at Midlife" (November 4th), 2) "Getting the Queer Sex You Want" (January 19th), 3) "Bisexuality,

Strength and Courage" (Early March) and 4) "Our Bodies Ourselves at 35—Reflections on Lesbian, Bi, and Trans Inclusion" (Early May).

Look for our calendar brochure listing all the events, Fenway resources and more that will be coming out soon! If you want a brochure, want to get on the Boundless email list, or want to find out more about the events, feel free to get in touch with me at jebin@fenwayhealth.org or 617-927-6369. It continues to be a real gift to be able to do this work and I hope to see all of you there. ▼

ICB from page 3

Hibino telling about working for peace in Palestine/Israel and making connections between oppressions and struggles. Later that night, the fun moved back to the Holiday Inn Metrodome for a wonderful Italian buffet dinner and lots of great dancing and schmoozing time.

Another full day of workshops on Saturday, and then Luigi Ferrer gave a warm and thoughtful keynote before a performance by Magdalene Hsu-Li closed the evening. I enjoyed Hsu-Li's political lyrics and she reminded me of a mix of Ani DiFranco and Michelle Shocked. The audience got quite a kick out of singing along with the refrain to her song "Fuck Bush."

Sunday morning was a final time for all of the attendees to gather. Robyn Ochs led a panel



Magdalene Hui-Li at ICB in Minneapolis.

of international attendees, sharing their insights from their varied countries around the globe. The organizers were appreciated for the well-run and lively conference and it was announced that the Toronto bi community was volunteering to be the host of the 2006 international conference. Start making your plan now. ▼

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CALENDAR *continued from page 12*

For information call the BRC office or contact John at 617-983-8788 or e-mail at bi_naturist2@eudoramail.com with 'BiPOC' in the subject line.

October 31 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Halloween Costume Brunch at Denise's in Natick, Noon. Please bring a potluck dish or drinks to share, and have fun coming in costume! Contact Denise at dpp1029@rcn.com or 508-315-3176 for directions.



Biversity Brunch, 1:00 p.m. Veggie Planet is popular and centrally located so we're doing it again. Veggie Planet is located at 47 Palmer Street (at Club Passim) in Harvard Square, Cambridge. It's vegetarian food. T Stop is Harvard Square on the Red Line.

November 2 ♦ Tuesday

Election Day: Go Out and Vote! This could be the most important election of our lives. Homophobic candidates for State Representative, State Senate, House of Representatives, and President want to turn back the hard-fought rights that we have won. Don't let them. That is only one of many reasons to get out to the polls today. Make your vote count.

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Personal Relationships: communication, levels of intimacy, setting limits." Call the Women's Center for the topic for that night. Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807. See October 5th.

November 3 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-8:45 p.m. See October 6th.

November 9 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. See October 12th.

November 10 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. See October 13th.

November 4 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Bowling, noon. Kick off the bowling season with BBWN! What, you didn't know there was a bowling season? Get yourself to Lanes and Games in Cambridge on Rt. 2 and see what the fuss is about. After a few games we'll take off for a local eatery for a late lunch.

Contact Ellyn at nellythrustmor@aol.com if you plan on going or need directions.

November 16 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Honesty: How honest do you really want me to be?" See October 5th.

November 18 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See October 6th.

November 19 ♦ Friday

BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Biways: Our Lives and Loves." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: BiWomen, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA, 02140 or e-mail to nellythrustmor@aol.com.

November 20 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch at Johnny D's in Somerville. A favorite brunch spot, Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Square in Somerville always draws the biggest bi brunch crowd. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

November 28 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Enjoy delicious vegetarian food at Buddha's Delight in Boston's Chinatown. On Beach Street between Harrison and Washington. Nearest T stop is Chinatown on the Orange Line. It's at the original ground-floor location.

November 30 ♦ Tuesday

BiWomen mailing, 7-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Join us. Socialize during and after.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

Wednesdays:

Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Saturdays: Dancing at Hollywood KTV, 41 Essex Street, Chinatown T, Boston. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. \$10 cover.

Sundays: Queer night, 9 p.m.-1 a.m., the Milky Way, 403 Centre St, Jamaica Plain. DJ and dance floor.



SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for BiWomen
(sliding scale)

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BiWomen wants you!!!

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The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Tuesdays:

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: 617-354-8807.

First Wednesdays, Third Thursdays:

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

CALENDAR

October 4 ♦ Monday

Officially the last day to register in Massachusetts is October 13th, but why wait until the last minute. Register now at any town or city hall (or the Registry of Motor Vehicles when applying for or renewing your license). You must be 18 years or older and a U.S. citizen. For more info see: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleifv/howreg.htm.

October 5 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. A discussion group for bisexual, bi-friendly, and questioning women. Topic: "Signifiers: what signs do you see used to indicate sexual preference? Do bi women have their own signifiers?" Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

October 6 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-8:45 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

October 9 ♦ Saturday

Crafty Day with Sheeri, 1-4 p.m. Bring your own art or craft and spend some time working on it in a fun environment, or just watch and be an inspiration. Contact Sheeri at awfief@gmail.com or 857-205-9786 for directions and details.

October 11 ♦ Monday

National Coming Out Day! Who do you need to come out to in your life? This may be the big day. Around the country there will be various events highlighting the



importance of coming out to yourself and to others.

October 12 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. The group is facilitated by Denise who can be contacted at dpp1029@rcn.com. Call 617-354-8807 for directions.

October 13 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. All bi community members welcome to attend. New board members are needed. Stop by and see first-hand what it's all about. The meeting is on the 4th floor of the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

October 16 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Brunch will be at Doyle's at 3484 Washington Street in Jamaica Plain, between the Green Street and Forest Hills stops on the Orange Line. The number at Doyle's is 617-524-2345.

October 19 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "What are you reading?" See October 5th.

October 21 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. See October 6th.

October 23 ♦ Saturday

Women's Dance with DJ Roberta in Worcester at the VFW Post, 115 Ballard Street. E-mail audigold@aol.com or phone 508-791-1327 for directions or other info.

October 24 ♦ Sunday

Crafty Day with Sheeri, 1-4 p.m. See October 9th.

Bisexual People of Color Gathering, 4-6 p.m. It's been a long time since the last gathering. This time we'll go with the input of interested people that are going to attend. Which would you rather have; a Sweats and Socks get together, a video party, or gather at a restaurant (Bertuccis, Pizzaria Uno, Fire & Ice to add to the suggested possibilities)? Whether you are Asian, Latino, Native American, African American, East Indian, Carribean, biracial or of mixed heritage, all diverse ethnicities and gender identities are welcome. Please bring a dish or a beverage to share if the Sweats and Socks or video party is top favorite.

Judy Glick, M.Ed., LMHC
licensed psychotherapist for lesbians,
gays, and bisexuals

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CALENDAR continues on page 11

Biways: Your Life and Loves

The Unintended Garden

By Ann Mrowicki

This was originally written for a seminar I took last winter/spring at Vermont College entitled "This place so far from home" that examined the experiences of class and economic shifts due to education. Asked to write about our journeys from our origins, I wrote about my arrival in my new life with my female partner after twenty-five years with my husband.

In reading all of these essays, I think of my own journey from home. Placed besides these other accounts, my story does not offer the apparent drama. But I have traveled ground my mother never intended. I have slipped through a weave of economic differences, joining other idealistic members of my generation into a willingly downward mobile life. I later decided that being dirt poor was too vulnerable, frustrating, and emotionally costly while raising kids. I was then blessed with a fulltime job that was not mind-dulling and meaningless. It gave me a finger-hold in the lowest economic rung of middle class life. I did hold a mortgage on the house I lived in. We ate well. But my parents were still put off by my life, with its simple country ways. Besides I hadn't fulfilled the family dream of a college education that most of my siblings, veterans of a Roman Catholic schooling, had achieved or were poised to achieve. My parents did not finish college themselves but wanted it for their brood. We were raised to move up in the middle class, not down.

Now, I am finally in college and so are my daughters. Again though, I'm living outside the life my mother had intended. I am a supporting mother, but I have again slipped down the economic pole. I have left my husband. In this new life, I wonder if I dare to put down new roots, my old ones still torn and tender. Then more than a metaphor, strangely, I spent my first couple months in this new town, in this new life, compulsively digging in the dirt. I didn't see this compulsion coming.

Those summer mornings often replayed this scene: I carefully slip out of my sleeping lover's embrace and silently don the tattered jeans and old

Garden continues on page 4



Bi Dreams

By Melissa Kulig

I thought coming out as a bisexual would be a piece of cake. After the angst of declaring my lesbianism in 1988 and timidly letting family and friends know, I thought I could handle anyone and any situation. What I didn't realize was the surprised attitude of those same family and friends. After all, it had been just over ten years since I had dated a man, and some people just didn't understand. But it was the nightmares that surprised me.

For three months, before I knew I was even questioning my lesbian identity, I was plagued with frightening nightmares several times a week. The men appeared in all shapes and sizes. They would climb through my bedroom window, step out of my closet, stand in a corner, or burst through my door. There was the tall, handsome blond who would stand near my bed looking aloof and acting like he was forced to be there. There was the ragged skinny guy who somehow scaled three stories of the side of the house and slipped through my open window. There was the adolescent boy who stood at the foot of my bed staring at me with sad eyes. And then there was the monster. He was a Quasimodo type with a lumpy face, a giant, white torso, broken teeth and hairy hands that could crush a small animal. He was aggressive, and would come at me until I screamed

Dreams continues on page 6

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Volunteers of the Month

Gail Zacharias

Robyn Ochs

Deb Morley

Wayne Bryant

Katrina Poehler

Melissa Kulig

Ann Mrowicki

Elena

Gina

Jane Barnes

And many more
fabulous people!
You know who
you are!

BiWomen is published bi-monthly.

Editor:

Ellyn Ruthstrom

Printed on
recycled paper

The Boston Bisexual Women's Network is a feminist, not-for-profit collective organization whose purpose is to bring women together for support and validation. It is meant to be a safe environment in which women of all sexual self-identities, class backgrounds, racial, ethnic and religious groups, ages, abilities and disabilities are welcome. Through the vehicles of discussion, support, education, outreach, political action and social groups related to bisexuality, we are committed to the goals of full acceptance as bisexuals within the gay and lesbian community, and to full acceptance of bisexuality and the liberation of all gay people within the larger society.

Blue Mood in a Blue State

What a hard month November has been. It's been quite a blow to people like myself who believed both that Americans were smart enough to see how misguided the current (and now future) president is and that we could trust our voting system. To see that the majority of people really think that invading other countries for oil, reducing taxes for the wealthiest few, and limiting women's right to comprehensive health care is the right thing for the U.S. to do just takes the wind out of me.

Putting together this newsletter every two months is usually a fun process for me. But right now I have a heavy heart from the election hangover and from a recent breakup. I was looking forward to this issue a great deal; telling the stories of our bi paths is always very inspiring to me. And the three wonderful writers who contribute on these pages do inspire me tremendously. But, unfortunately, not enough for me to step beyond my blue mood and write enough articles to fill this newsletter to its usual 12 pages.

But to fill my customary page two column I will encourage each of you to take some personal action to make sure that in two years we take back Congress and make this president the lamest duck we've ever seen. There are going to be important races in just two years that will be fought in various states that will open up the opportunity for the Democrats to take back a majority in both the House and the Senate.

Find out if those races are in your state. And if they are not, figure out a way that you and others in your state can help support the work in nearby states. Democrats won New Hampshire this November and I believe it was from the work of thousands of concerned New Englanders who travelled to New Hampshire to offer their time and energy to spread the word of the Democratic party's political vision. There's much to do, and when my own blue mood passes, I'll be out there again helping to make change. Hope to see you on the biways.

Ellyn Ruthstrom

NEXT IN *BiWOMEN*

The *BiWomen* theme for
February/March is:

Butch/Femme

Do you like to play along the butch/femme continuum? Do you like to turn it on its head? Are all bis femmes? (No!) Do these labels really annoy you? Share your stories about how you identify and what butch/femme means to you.

Deadline: January 14, 2005

FUTURE ISSUES

April/May
??????

Send your suggestions for future topics to
nellythrustmor@aol.com

PLEASE SUBMIT TO *BiWOMEN*!

Send articles, calendar entries, letters,
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BiWomen

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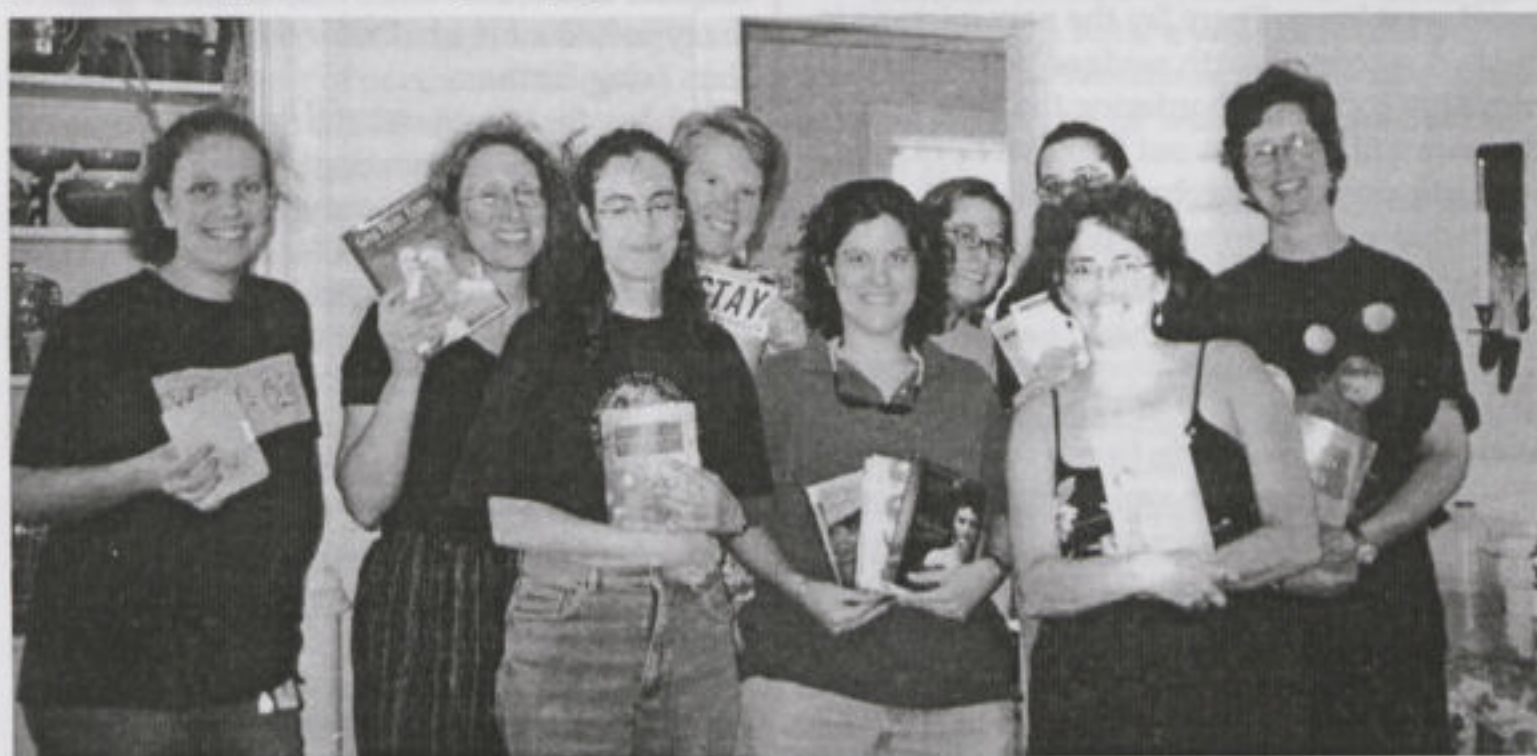
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The fifth annual BBWN bookswap was a great success this past September. Well read and well fed bi women gathered at Ellyn's. If you'd like to host a brunch, see the sidebar for info.



Bi Women Themes 2001-2004

Looking over the variety of topics presented in the newsletter over the last three years, it's fascinating to see what we can look at from a bi perspective. If you're interested in a back issue, email Ellyn at nellythrustmor@aol.com.

Dec/Jan 2002 Being Bi in the Boonies
 Feb/Mar 2002 Spirituality
 Apr/May 2002 The Arts: Bi Style
 June/July 2002 Married Bisexual Women
 Aug/Sept 2002 Food, Friends & Family
 Oct/Nov 2002 Bi to Bi Relationships

Dec/Jan 2003 Fantasies
 Feb/Mar 2003 Older Women in Our Lives
 Apr/May 2003 Why Bi?
 June/July 2003 Commitment

Aug/Sept 2003 Bi Women in Popular Culture
 Oct/Nov 2003 Healing Paths

Dec/Jan 2004 Bisexual Boston
 Feb/Mar 2004 What Are You Reading?
 Apr/May 2004 Bi Women and Lesbians: Can We Talk?
 June/July 2004 Bi Politics: Local, National, International
 Aug/Sept 2004 Carrying a Tune: Music in Our Lives
 Oct/Nov 2004 The Fiction Issue

Brunch Coordinator Wants You to Host!

BBWN potluck brunches are a great way to meet other bi women in the Boston area. We try to hold a brunch in a member's home each month so that people can relax and share food and experiences in a safe space. Deb Morley is the brunch coordinator, so please contact her at debmo345@comcast.net if you are interested in hosting a brunch. Thanks Deb for volunteering! And check out the calendar on pages 7-8 for the brunches and other activities coming up in January. Hope you can join us.

Bisexual Women Needed for Online Study Research

If you are 18 years or older 1) self identify as a bisexual woman 2) have been in or are currently in a female couple relationship (with a lesbian) and 3) have disclosed your bisexual identity to your lesbian partner, please log on to www.webresearchinfo.com. You may participate in an online study being conducted at John F. Kennedy University, Graduate School of Professional Psychology, in Pleasant Hill, California. If you have any questions about the study you can email Elayne Valassopoulos at Elayne@webresearchinfo.com.

Garden from page 1

t-shirt. The wooden stairs groan inadvertently under my light barefooted tread. The gardening gloves stuffed in my back pocket leave a telltale trail behind as yesterday's dried caked mud crumbles off of them. Emerging from the door, I'm blinded briefly by the morning light spilling over Woodford Mountain, east of town.

The rumblings of the beasts of Main Street greet me. After years of living down a peaceful dirt road, I now inhabit Main Street of a town, which by Vermont standards, is not so small. This Main Street is also an important artery across the spine of the Green Mountains. A perpetual caravan of tractor trailers screech, thunder, and grumble up to the stoplight just a skip and a hop from this big old white house.

I dart over to the garage and gather up tools into the ancient, sturdy wheelbarrow and gingerly make my way over the chilly shadowed west lawn. There lay the new mistress in her bed, a strip of earth wedged below a tumbling rock wall, bordering the back driveway. She reaches out four feet from the wall and stretches maybe forty-five feet westwardly away from the house. This I slowly discovered had gone untended for more than twenty years.

It had started out innocently enough. I asked our new landlady if I could plant a few kitchen herbs, something from my old life. She showed me around the various beds, left long to their own devices, surrounding the house. I fixated on the eastern pointed end of this long strip. It was closest to the back door, thus the kitchen.

I had the remaining weeks of spring to dream of a little triangular bed planted with oregano, parsley, basil, chives, and a few pansies. I had only brief opportunities in my few visits to this faraway new town in the interceding weeks to pull at the exploding jungle of weeds as they reasserted their annual dominion. I didn't live here yet.

Finally the weekend after I perched onto this new life in this

second story walk-up, I went to my future garden. This was my second great departure. I had been preparing for it in a host of ways for months, for years. Now I stood at the tip of this long bed. I had left my large, Catholic, middle class family as a young woman to live the simple life in the woods of southern Vermont and to bear and raise my daughters with their father, my husband. Now here, more than twenty years later, I stand at the edge of this ungoverned wedge of earth in the center of a different town.

I had meant only to pull up enough roots to plant a few utilitarian, sensual necessities. The tangle was deeper and thicker than I knew. And the earth was compellingly rich and dark, though it only had a few worms. Earth needs air, light, and water. The silent labor of worms supports this. So I dug deeper. I could plant a few more herbs: sage, tarragon, cilantro, and oh, lavender! Lavender's tangy, fuzzy soft scent is a balm for the aching, weary soul. I dug further.

I dug that first weekend because digging was necessary. The growing season was well underway and this was only the first step. I told my partner, as she left for a music festival that first weekend with her son, I would be fine. Digging here, preparing this ground with my hands would free my mind to reflect on this brand new life.

Dig I did, but reflect I did not. My only thoughts were "How long is this root?" and "How far will I go to get it out?" or "Where are all the worms?" or "What does this bit of earth need to bring it into balance to support healthy plants?" The bed worked its magic on me. I was hooked into a bigger task that snaked across summer to fall, when I finally had to get a job with a paycheck.

My overwhelmed heart was numbed silent. I didn't expect this reaction from myself. I had planned for this, longed for this, barely tolerating the wait for this life with the woman I love and for the different career that beckoned even longer. Joy, grief, sweat, and tears mingled into that uprooted ground.

All summer, I slipped from her arms in the dawn light to work the garden in the protective shadow of the house, sparing my pale, flecked skin from the high sun. I couldn't help my self. Now the bed, nearly cleared of deeply rooted weeds, is filled with many herbs, flowers, annuals, biennials, perennials and even bulbs for spring. I had not intended to become a gardener; I had done this so poorly in my husband's garden. He was the master gardener there.

In this new town, who would know I

Garden continues on next page



Ellyn Ruthstrom (right) presented Deb Morley (left) with the Bisexual Resource Center's Unsung Hero Award at a recent BBWN brunch. Other awardees were given their award at the Celebrate Bisexuality Day festivities in September at ManRay.

Bi Bi Jane

By Jane Barnes

Call For Proposals

I n love at three with a gorgeous older woman, four. I adored her lisp and her blond ringlets. Her twin was cute, too. Another little towhead, but not as clever (boys mature later). Even at the start, I saw loves as double.

Fast forward to the fifth grade when Judy moved to town. She had a soft upper lip, dark good looks, and always smelled like shampoo and starch. She was exotic, which meant Catholic, and she owned a precious thing: a black doll. My own house was a chaos of bad housekeeping and new babies; I loved to stay over at Judy's where everything was clean and orderly.

Judy moved to a fancier house, within walking distance (the other was too far away—eight blocks—we were living in a fishing village on the coast of northern California) and her mother led the 4-H Club sewing group. In those dark-paneled rooms (it was most elegant, with a large garden, and waxed floors, couches covered with brocade) we learned to baste and sew, and try on half-finished dresses. I loved her. We took "naps," we took baths. We explored. And meanwhile, the other girls were playing spin the bottle.

I attended those parties, got trapped into kissing Tommy Mayhew who delivered claustrophobically moist kisses. Eeaweeuw! Then there were dances, with the two "teams" facing each other. That is, girls "against" boys. Judy was sent to a boarding school, far away, over the mountain, and I thought I'd try the other team. They were interesting, too.

A series of boyfriends, with whom the initial attraction was always erotic, followed closely by whether they were kind. Brains ought to have played a bigger role, but did not. I fell in love with a beautiful boy; dumped him when I got bored. He got back together with

me, then dumped ME out of spite. I took a large handful of aspirin, but no one noticed that I'd lost my hearing for three days.

Off to college in Portland, Oregon, whereupon I met my roommate a femmy straight, and a new friend, a fiercely intelligent butch girl (though I couldn't have called them that then). But nothing told me about bisexuality—I could hardly look at the world "homosexual." I knew no one who was THAT WAY (I thought). Then the next year a stint in South America on a study abroad program, and I was bored with Portland and moved to San Francisco. A bit of an attraction to a caustic, pretty girl in my Russian lit class. If something was to happen, neither of us could start it.

First sex with a boy/man, a few times and then I gave it up. After a year, gave him up, too. I was too adventurous. Already he wanted to settle down, and he wasn't even a senior in college yet.

Met an older man. To escape daddy ran away to the east coast with a worse daddy. I finished school, moved to Boston. Got a job at MIT. Discovered Colette. I was 23. Could see that Colette was bisexual. That meant she liked men, but was interested in women. Her Cheri novels were a tremendous find, both in terms of their gorgeous writing and their orientation. Colette married an older man, was lovers with a woman for ten years, then another man, etc. I wrote poems about it. I knew it: I was like Colette!

I left the older man when I found feminism. Had done some sexual experimentation with women. It felt a little daring, since the other women didn't identify as bi or lesbian. But then neither did I, and proceeded to fall in love with a male friend. We had an open relationship, which meant he occasionally saw other people, and so did I. His were sometimes men, and I knew it but didn't know it. Our arrangement worked; it went on for six years. And then I fell in love with a woman.

But she was straight, so I forced myself to give her up. My lesbian friends told me that I was probably a lesbian. That didn't fit living with a man I loved, so I left him. Came out. If I was going to be accused of a lack of courage, I would prove everyone wrong. Met a woman at a bar, moved in with her: lesbian legitimacy.

Four years passed, I wanted a more sedate, grownup life. Would have it with bona fide lesbian, so I left her, ran around a bit, stopped running around, and found myself interested

Bi Bi continues on page 6

"Women and the Media 2005: Taking Our Place in the Public Conversation" is seeking proposals for the second annual conference. WAM! will be held at MIT's brand new Stata Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts March 18-20, 2005. Keynoters will include Maria Hinojosa, Jill Nelson, and more TBA! The Center for New Words is hosting the WAM! Conference and will bring together more than 300 participants for two days of meeting, discussing, and exchanging our observations, ideas, experiences, opinions, and tools for change—and to plan together for action. You are invited to submit a proposal for a panel or workshop if you are a media professional, an activist, an academic, a "citizen" media watchdog—or, actually, any other progressive concerned about the media's direction.

Especially encouraged are proposals from women of color, professionals working in broadcast and online media, and students. Contact New Words for more information, 617-876-5310. Submissions will be reviewed and evaluated by the steering committee. Please send your submission to cfp@centerfornewwords.org. Submission deadline is December 31, 2004. Notification of acceptance or rejection is January 28, 2005.

Garden from page 4

worked all my life with my hands as a baker, especially with my now new work as case-worker? And they would think, by my present life, I was lesbian by my present life, which I'm not. I have loved and still love men and women: I'm bisexual. But those who don't know me well can't see my roots quite entangled, reaching deep, deep down. Who knows of the compelling mysteries and whispered promises in the earth? ▼

Fetish Fair Fleamarket

The Boston Sheraton Hotel is the place to be for the Fetish Fair Fleamarket on December 17-19 in downtown Boston. Over 100 crafters, retailers, and information tables will fill the entire ballroom level of the hotel. This extravaganza is the largest leather/fetish/SM event in New England and is attended every year by over 4000 people. Dozens of classes, taught by experts in the leather/fetish/SM lifestyle will run throughout Saturday and Sunday. Admission to both the vending area and all classes is just \$10 per person, good for both days. Be sure to bring Photo I.D. since you must be 18 years of age or over to enter the event. Do not bring children or pets. For more info, call 617-876-NELA or visit www.nla-newengland.org/fff.html.

Dreams from page 1

myself awake. One time, still dreaming, I raced down the hall crying to my startled roommate to call the cops. What were all these men doing trying to get into my bedroom?

During the day, I was a quivering mass of nervous energy. Everything and everyone, especially strange men, scared me. If I rounded the corner in Walgreen's and found a man perusing the cold medicine aisle I would run in the other direction. Everyone was suspicious, with a dangerous potential that I couldn't name. I began to tire of feeling afraid and vulnerable. Deciding to become more proactive, I started asking the nightly ghosts what exactly it was that they wanted. If there was no reply, as there often was, I told them to go away and leave me alone. Eventually they did, and I became less afraid of sleeping, and regained my confidence during the day.

It wasn't until a year later that I realized they represented all of my fears about bringing

men back into my life and consciousness. When my suspicion and mistrust of men subsided, I began meeting male artists, writers, and good friends of friends. These were decent and kind men that were not often in my life as a young person. I had blanketed my vision based on my bad experiences with young men in my past. Was it possible that I had to "get men out of my system" before I could see the other half of the population in a new light?

The bad dreams of that time also represented my fears of negative reactions to my bisexuality. I was accused of not being feminist. My lesbian friends called me a traitor and that I "was taking the easy way out." My family said, "I thought you were gay?" So, as I did over ten years ago, I found myself educating people all over again about lesbianism and bisexuality. Many folks are still confused, but I hope that my continued happiness and security will be an example for them, and that my nighttime dreams remain dreams. ▼

Bi Bi from page 5

in men. Got a boyfriend, enjoyed him, but he wasn't all that serious. We broke up and I fell in love with a friend. This WAS serious. She was lesbian, but I was — horror of horrors — bisexual. Never mind, we "married," and lived together almost ten years.

In that time, an attraction or two for a man — I was no saint. But no infidelity. I'm not the type. When she left me, my attraction moved to men, and has stayed there, mostly, for seven years. These days, however, certain women are looking more interesting. But it doesn't matter to me, which sex I might fall in love with. I fall in love with a person anyway.

Bisexual all my life, and knowing it at 12 and 24 and denying it at 33 (when I came out as "lesbian"), and finding it again at 44 was a great relief. I declared myself again when I was single again at 54. For the last time. It's a great relief, but somewhat dismaying to observe the occasional shudders of lesbians, or the queries of straight women who think perhaps I'm "experimenting," if you can call 25 years with women that.

I adore talking to other bis. We're sometimes radically different from each other — or stunningly alike. We have the same conundrums. We agree we're not exactly both gay and straight. We bring our "gayness" to any "straight" relationship, and "straightness" to any "gay" relationship. Which means simply that I have the other perspective always with me, no matter who I love. You can't see it. On the street, I'm a "lesbian" if with a woman,

"straight" if I'm with a man. But it's not true. I see more than that. It's a little like being able to see around corners. ▼

Visit BBWN online at:
biresource.org/bbwn
for a calendar listing of
local bisexual events.

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CALENDAR *continued from page 8*

Lanes and Games in Cambridge on Rt. 2 and see what the fuss is about. After a few games we'll take off for a local eatery for a late lunch. Contact Ellyn at nellythrustmor@aol.com if you plan on going or need directions.

January 11 ♦ Tuesday
Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. See December 14th.

January 12 ♦ Wednesday
Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. All bi community members welcome to attend. New board members are needed. Stop by and see first-hand what it's all about. The meeting is on the 4th floor of the Boston Living Center, 29 Stanhope St. in Back Bay.

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-9:00 p.m. at the Diesel Cafe. See December 15th.

January 14 ♦ Friday
BiWomen Submissions Deadline. This issue's theme is "Butch/Femme." See page 2 for more ideas. Send submissions to: *BiWomen*, P.O. Box 400639, Cambridge, MA, 02140 or e-mail to nellythrustmor@aol.com.

Poly/Bi But Looking Mixer, 7:00 p.m. The mixer in November was a big success, so Martin is going to do it again. Location to be announced.

January 15 ♦ Saturday
Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Christopher's is doing brunch again, so we're going to go check it out. Located at 1920 Mass. Ave. in Porter Square. Nearest T stop is Porter Square on the Red Line.

January 18 ♦ Tuesday
Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. The topic is: "Civil Rights and Marriage Equality." See December 7th.

January 19 ♦ Wednesday
Getting the Queer Sex You Want, 7-9 p.m., Fenway Community Health. Mind reading. It's often what people seem to expect from a sex partner, but it is so often not the case. How can you tell your date what you want to do in bed without sounding like a bad movie? Whether you want something wild or prefer it quiet, come to our workshop led by Gunner Scott, Creator of Butch Dyke Boy Productions and Julie Ebin, Boundless Coordinator. Learn more about the sexy side of negotiating and safety, including communicating about your body and anatomy, and more. People of all genders and orientations are invited to attend. Space is limited. Please RSVP to Julie at 617-927-6369 or jebin@fenwayhealth.org.

January 20 ♦ Thursday
Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-8:45 p.m. See December 1st.

January 23 ♦ Sunday
BBWN "Tea Party"
brunch at Hilary's in Malden, Noon. Bring a few bags of your favorite tea to share and a brunch item. Call Hilary at 781-397-6468 or email for directions
 htolan@hotmail.com.



January 26 ♦ Wednesday
NEW DAY AND NEW TIME!!!

BiWomen mailing, 7:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807. Can you say label, stuff, and seal? Help BBWN get the newsletter out to women around the country. Socialize during and after, when we'll head to Central Square for a cuppa.

January 30 ♦ Sunday
Biversity Brunch, 1:00 p.m. Bi Brunch began as a monthly Dim Sum brunch about 15 years ago and this month we're going to celebrate by dining at Hei La Moon, a new restaurant at 88 Beach Street, just outside of Chinatown. From South Station, follow Beech St. about three blocks. It will be on the right side after you cross Lincoln St.

Biversity Boston is the mixed gender bisexual Network of Greater Boston.

Ongoing Events

Wednesdays:
Gendertalk, 8:30-9:30 p.m. on WMBR 88.1 FM. Deals with transgender and queer issues.

Women's Club Nights

Saturdays: Dancing at Hollywood KTV, 41 Essex Street, Chinatown T, Boston. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. \$10 cover.

Sundays: Queer night, 9 p.m.-1 a.m., the Milky Way, 403 Centre St, Jamaica Plain. DJ and dance floor.



SUBSCRIPTION RATE

for *BiWomen*
 (sliding scale)

- ___ \$0-\$20 (pay what you can)
- ___ \$20-\$30 (suggested)
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***BiWomen* wants you!!!**

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____

BBWN, P.O. BOX 400639, Cambridge, MA 02140

The "Bi Office"

is the Bisexual Resource Center, located at 29 Stanhope Street, behind Club Cafe, right next door to Bertucci's and just down the street from the Hard Rock Cafe. For info call 617-424-9595.

Ongoing Events

1st & 3rd Tuesdays:

Bi Women's Rap. 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. For info and discussion topics call 617-354-8807.

2nd Tuesdays:

Married Bi Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge. Info: 617-354-8807.

First Wednesdays, Third Thursdays:

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

CALENDAR

December 1 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-9 p.m. An informal support group for people who think they may be bisexual or attracted to more than one sex. A small donation is requested to help pay for the space. The group meets at the Bisexual Resource Center at 29 Stanhope St. in Boston. Call 617-424-9595 for info.

December 7 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. A discussion group for bisexual, bi-friendly, and questioning women. Topic: "Families: How does your family relate to your bisexuality?" Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., 617-354-8807.

December 14 ♦ Tuesday

Married But Not Straight Women's Discussion Group, 7:30-9 p.m. at the Cambridge Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. A support group for bi and lesbian women who are married or in long-term relationships. Contact Denise at dpp1029@rcn.com for information. Meets on the second Tuesday of each month. Call 617-354-8807 for directions.

December 15 ♦ Wednesday

Bisexual Resource Center Board Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. This is the meeting where we review the past year's accomplishments, look ahead to the next, and elect new board members and officers. New board members are vital to the organization, so please consider serving. All bi community members are welcome and encouraged to attend. The meeting is at the Living Center at 29 Stanhope Street in Back Bay.

Boston Queer Poly Women's Discussion Group, 7-9:00 p.m. at the Diesel Cafe, 257 Elm St. in Somerville. T stop is Davis on the Red Line. The group meets to discuss issues relevant to women in the poly community, especially those of interest to queer women. We range from social chatting to more in-depth discussions, depending on what people want to discuss. If you haven't attended before, please email Donna at dalbino83@yahoo.com so that we can arrange a way to meet up.

December 17-19 ♦ Friday - Sunday

Fetish Fair Fleamarket. New England Leather Alliance presents its semiannual Fetish Fair Fleamarket in the Boston Sheraton Hotel. 18+. See www.nla-newengland.org/fff.html for more info.

December 18 ♦ Saturday

Biversity Brunch, 11:30 a.m. Brunch will be at

Johnny D's on Holland St. in Davis Sq. in Somerville always draws the biggest bi brunch crowd, so we're going again this month. The Davis stop on the Red Line is just across the street.

December 21 ♦ Tuesday

Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "Holidaze." See December 7th.

December 23 ♦ Thursday

Coming Out as Bisexual. 7-8:45 p.m. See December 1st.

December 26 ♦ Sunday

Biversity Brunch, 1 p.m. Have all your friends and family left town for the holidays? Celebrate Boxing Day with the Bi Community at Bertucci's, 21 Brattle St. in Harvard Square. Perhaps afterwards we'll go out for some sinfully chocolate dessert. It could happen! Nearest T stop is Harvard on the Red Line.

December 31 ♦ Friday

Biversity Boston's FIRST NIGHT, 7:30 p.m. It has been a Boston bi community tradition to begin the New's Year's Eve celebration with vegetarian food at Buddha's Delight in Boston's Chinatown. From there, the group will decide what First Night festivities to partake in. Buddha's Delight is downstairs on Beach Street between Harrison and Washington. Nearest T stop is Chinatown on the Orange Line.



January 4 ♦ Tuesday

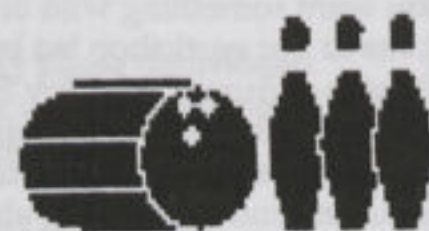
Bi Rap at the Women's Center, 7:30-9:00 p.m. Topic: "New Year's Resolutions for Bisexuals." See December 7th.

January 5 ♦ Wednesday

Coming Out as Bisexual, 7-8:45 p.m. See December 1st.

January 9 ♦ Sunday

BBWN Bowling, noon. Kick off the bowling season with BBWN! What, you didn't know there was a bowling season? Get yourself to



CALENDAR continues on page 7